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Allen C. Thomas

910

To Dr Edw Rhoads

With the kind regards of  
The Author.

Th Wpland.

Wilmington, 16 xi. 1865







INTERIOR OF SWARTHMORE HALL.

# FOUR LECTURES

ON THE

## RISE, PROGRESS,

AND

## PAST PROCEEDINGS

OF

### The Society of Friends

IN GREAT BRITAIN,

WITH BRIEF HISTORICAL NOTICES OF SOME PRECEDING AND  
CONTEMPORARY EVENTS,

BY

WILLIAM THISTLETHWAITE.

---

"I KNOW THY WORKS, AND THY LABOUR, AND THY PATIENCE, AND  
HOW THOU CANST NOT BEAR THEM WHICH ARE EVIL. \* \* \*  
NEVERTHELESS I HAVE SOMEWHAT AGAINST THEE, BECAUSE THOU  
HAST LEFT THY FIRST LOVE."—*St. John to the Church at Ephesus.*

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LONDON:

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## P R E F A C E .

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The four Lectures now offered to the public, contain a historical review—not a history—of the period of which they treat.

They bear the same relation to history that scene painting bears to a pre-Raphaelite picture : the minuter details are omitted, and the stronger lights and shadows are painted in with a view to the general effect.

In the preparation of them, it has not been my object to set forth new facts, or to indulge in new speculations, but, as far as is practicable in so brief and popular an outline, to place the old and well known facts, in what I believe to be their true relation to other cognate facts by which they were influenced, and with which, if we would expound their true character, they ought ever to be associated.

The past experience of the Society of Friends forms no exception to the general truth, that all history “has been in the main *sequential*, that each of its phases has been the consequence of some prior phase, and the natural prelude to that which has succeeded it.” In the arrangement of the facts and reasonings contained in the work, I have endeavoured to keep this truth steadily in view. If my purpose has been to



any considerable extent successfully attained, the outline, though brief, will not be without its value; if the sequence be fanciful, and the connection unreal, the Lectures will not accomplish the object for which they were prepared.

No thoughtful student of history can have failed to observe, that in such a review, particular individuals—if we may so speak—stand out on the canvass, as representative men; in the first instance, no doubt, themselves moulded and influenced by surrounding circumstances; but ultimately, in various degrees, moulding and influencing the generation among whom they lived. It is convenient to give these men prominence; while others almost equally able, active, and historical, but not equally representative, are allowed to rest beneath the surface. The earlier and later Puritans, Archbishop Laud, George Fox, and the Yearly meeting's Committee of 1760, on this account stand out in the following pages, not on the ground of their individual ability and importance, but of their character as *representatives* of the times in which they lived, and of the currents of thought, common to certain portions of the community among whom they laboured.

The reputation of the early Friends has suffered from an imperfect exposition, in connection with the history of their lives, of the peculiarities of the times in which they lived. There has been a disposition manifest on the part of some to bring their proceedings to the test of modern standards, and, because they may

not in every case have been found to square with these standards, an unmerited censure has been pronounced upon them. Others have fallen into the opposite error of delivering a general eulogium on all their acts and sentiments, which being equally indiscriminating, has failed to delineate with substantial accuracy their true historical position.

In dealing with the reputation of the dead, it has been my purpose, in the interest of the living, "naught to extenuate, nor aught to set down in malice." I have attempted, also, in passing along, to indicate that which was accidental and transitory—having its main connection with the times when the events happened—in contrast with that which was essential and enduring, and which, without reference to fluctuation and change, belonged not only to the time then present, but to all time. From this review of the past I have endeavoured to draw some lessons of wisdom applicable to the present, and some results of experience calculated to influence and to guide our action in the future.

I have only further to add that it is several years since some of these Lectures were written. I had then no view to their publication: hence I find it now all but impossible, by reference to brief and imperfect notes, to verify the quotations,\* or to indicate, in a few instances, the exact sources from which they were drawn. It may, however, be stated generally that for the facts contained in the first Lecture I am chiefly indebted to the current Church Histories,



Alen C. Thomas

910

To Dr Edw. Thoms

With the kind regards of  
The Author.

The W. Islands.

Wilmington. 16<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1865



FOUR LECTURES  
ON THE  
RISE, PROGRESS, AND PAST PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
SOCIETY OF FRIENDS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

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LECTURE FIRST.

ON THE STATE OF RELIGIOUS OPINION AND PRACTICE  
PRIOR TO THE RISE OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

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"But now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage."—*Paul to the Galatians.*

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FROM the delivery of our Lord's sermon on the Mount to the issuing of the decrees of the Council of Trent, there was a long interval of time. During that interval, however, many causes had combined to produce the mighty contrast which marks the character of the respective epochs.

From the earliest times, a decay in the true spiritual life of the church has too often been succeeded by an increase of its external observances; for it is easier to practise a ceremonial than to change the life, and men are naturally more delighted by the pomp and splendour of outward forms than by the duty of devoting the heart an entire sacrifice to God.

The consequences flowing from the early-received opinions on the diffusion and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, on the authority of tradition, on the power of the church to decree ceremonies, and especially from



the usurpation of all spiritual functions connected with the cure of souls, by a priesthood too often both ignorant and immoral, very early tended to extinguish, with the right of private judgment, a true sense of individual responsibility to God. Under these circumstances, it is not strange that all spiritual truth became gradually obscured and corrupted from the simplicity of its original.

The history of Christianity in this country before the period of the Reformation abundantly illustrates this general tendency.

Of the condition of the early British church few memorials have come down to us ; but from the landing of Augustine, about the close of the sixth century, the process described, amid various interruptions, went steadily forward. The church of the Anglo-Saxons was at that time existing, and for a considerable period it continued to retain a purer creed and a simpler ritual than its rival. The operations of both churches, however, were conducted in an age of ignorance, superstition, and semi-barbarism. The right of the common people to exercise any judgment in the choice of their religion was not then recognised ; so that missionary enterprises were an affair between the king and his nobility and the clergy. Ultimately the purer and the more strictly aboriginal church became absorbed into the system of its rival. Before the consolidation of the two churches many conversions from heathenism had taken place, and the Roman hierarchy had begun to take deep root in the country, for kings as well as priests were now among its nursing fathers. It became by degrees incorporated with the several states of the Heptarchy,

and bishops took rank with earls in the great councils of the nation. Tithes and church-shot, plough alms and Peter's pence, in place of voluntary offerings, now flowed into its exchequer, and it adopted a more courtly and gorgeous ceremonial adapted to the change in its condition.

Religious houses, which had long existed among the Anglo-Saxons, under not very objectionable conditions, began at this period to change their character; for "the ascetic principle firmly rooted in the east was spreading itself over all the churches of western Christendom."

The religious orders used all their influence to support the growing pretensions of the papacy, and under their auspices a movement was commenced the object of which was, by lowering the authority of both the parochial clergy and the civil power, to bring the church into closer dependence on the Roman See.

Before this period the church had encountered many errors. Obstinate heresies had resulted in several schisms. The deity of Christ, the doctrine of original sin, the efficacy of the sacraments, and many other difficult questions, had been the subjects of protracted controversies; but an authority had now arisen which claimed the right finally to determine all dogmatic questions, and the power infallibly to decide the orthodoxy of men's opinions on all subjects by a reference to the terms of a theological creed. It was unfortunate, however, in connexion with the beneficial exercise of this authority, and taking into account the interests of that truth of which it professed to be the guardian, that the mischief caused by the errors it sanctioned, was greater



than the benefit which resulted from the errors it excluded. Before the Norman conquest, both learning and religion had fallen into profound neglect, but this condition was rather favorable than otherwise to the progress of the Roman superstition. The papal supremacy was at this time recognised, the confessional was instituted, absolution was practised, prayers for the dead were offered, relics were revered, and soul-shot was extensively paid for releasing deceased friends out of purgatory.

William of Normandy received the papal sanction for the invasion of England, in return for which, by confirming the existing rights of the clergy and extending their powers, he connected the English church more closely with Rome. Though the energy of his character and the vigour of his administration prevented for the present the subjugation of his country, yet the tendency of his policy under other circumstances would have been strongly in this direction. The canon law was established, and separate courts of judicature, presided over by bishops, were organized for its administration. The higher offices in the church were bestowed on foreign ecclesiastics; and the celibacy of the clergy was now more rigorously enforced: but this increase of power brought with it no evident sense of increased responsibility. By the general consent of historians, gross ignorance and immorality pervaded every class of society, and many even of the clergy were guilty of the most atrocious crimes. The monks treated the rules of their order with scorn, and indulged themselves in every sensual gratification.

Such was the condition of things that ushered in the

great struggle between the ecclesiastical and the civil power. In the progress of this contest, by practising on the ignorance and credulity of men, applying without reserve the terrors of superstition, the church was able to arm subjects against their sovereign, and to kindle the flames of war that were destined to fill Europe with confusion.

The design of Hildebrand in the prosecution of this policy was to secure—first the *independence*, and ultimately the *ascendancy* of the church. He objected to the exercise of any control by the sovereign over the freedom of its action, or of any veto upon the appointment of its ministers. By one irresponsible head, its machinery was to be directed, and it must influence, without control, the subjects of all christian states. Out of the pale of the church at this time, unity of system and purpose was nowhere to be found. Some governments were shaken by revolutions, some were terrified by threats of excommunication, “and not a few were anxious to strengthen usurped power by the aid of the Holy See.”

The successors of Gregory steadily adhered to his policy. They encouraged the Crusades; they increased the Monastic orders. Now they humbled kings through their influence over the barons and the people; then they overawed a turbulent nobility by the combined powers of the monarch and the church. By superstition or by fear, by exerting force or practising fraud, the supremacy of the church must be attained.

In this country, at every step of their progress, they encountered, however, some resistance.

The councils of Clarendon in 1164 defined the province

of the ecclesiastical power and limited its exercise. The statute of provisors enacted in 1350, that the "king and other lords shall present to benefices of their own or their ancestor's foundation, and not the bishop of Rome," and "that the free elections, presentments, and collations of benefices, shall stand in right of the crown or its subjects, notwithstanding any provisions from Rome," to the contrary.

The power to devise real estate to ecclesiastical corporations was limited by the law of Mortmain, passed in 1393, and by the provisions of the statute of pre-munire—"if any persons should purchase from the court of Rome any translations to benefices, or should bring thence into England any processes, sentences of excommunication, or other instruments, or should receive and execute them, they were declared to be out of the king's protection; their goods and chattels were to be forfeited, and their persons subjected to imprisonment."

But the progress of the papacy in this unequal struggle, though interrupted, was not arrested. Looking steadily to the end, in every difficulty the church "bent to the breeze," and again moved on. Circumstances are not always unpropitious: a king dies, a disputed succession intervenes, and many events occur, that by affecting the position of a country, give a new direction to its policy. But the papacy never dies; the head and intellect of the huge body live through every change in its material condition. Under these circumstances it was not strange, that in this age the secular should be subjugated by the ecclesiastical authority; and that the priesthood should be erected into an independent power,



asserting first an equal, and ultimately a superior position to the civil government.

Thus the church attained its end ; success crowned the labour of centuries. "It made a wilderness and called it peace," but the success was followed by paralysis ; for during the long and dismal period that ensued, scarcely an event occurs to mark its individual life. The dark ages settled upon it with their deepest gloom. English divines made no contributions of importance even to Roman Catholic theology, and they lent no assistance in the revival of letters.

The superstitions of Rome had long been firmly rooted in the popular mind of England when Wickliffe began his crusade against the papacy. His sentiments on the corruptions of the church were delivered in terms of the utmost force and severity. Believing that the Pope "was the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place," he vigorously attacked the whole system of which he was the head. He denounced the Romish priesthood, and controverted their theory of the sacraments. It was blasphemy to call any *man* the head of the church ; the election of the Pope by Cardinals was a device of the devil. The infallibility of the church of Rome in matters of faith is the greatest blasphemy of Anti-christ ; episcopal benedictions, confirmations, consecration of churches, &c., were but tricks to get money. He taught that clergymen may marry, and that deacons and priests may preach without license from Pope or Bishop. He held that baptism doth not confer grace, but that it signifies grace previously given ; that extreme unction is useless and no sacrament ; and that even confirmation "is not much necessary to salvation."

He revived an important truth, which had long been obscured by the Roman superstition, maintaining that the New Testament is a perfect rule of faith and manners, and that it ought to be read by the people; and in order to give effect to his views, he translated it into the vulgar tongue. It would be interesting to know the extent to which his opinions were received by the mass of his countrymen. They sufficed to excite the opposition of the papacy; but this is consistent with but a limited diffusion. Much of the power of Wickliffe would depend upon the range of his living voice. The art of printing was not then known, and the multiplication of manuscripts was expensive and laborious; moreover, under any circumstances, subjection to a feudal aristocracy in an era of civil commotion, and to the training of an ignorant priesthood in the darkest age of the church, were conditions not favourable to the development of independent religious inquiry. It might be that the good man had sowed his seed in an ungenial soil; it required but the influence of a favourable season, however, to raise it into vigorous life. And this soon came.

An unseemly struggle between rival Popes for the possession of St. Peter's chair was now agitating the church; and, to the great scandal of ecclesiastical dogmas, the exercise of private judgment was needed to decide on the validity of their respective claims. Long had the venerable institution resisted all attacks and silenced all opposition from without. To give greater effect to its spiritual jurisdiction, it had invoked the aid of the civil power, and kindled penal fires. Thus the faith of the nation had become orthodox and

homogeneous; there was no disturbing element visible, but growing symptoms of inherent weakness in the body had begun to manifest themselves in its members.

Such was its condition when called to defend itself against the attacks of the German Reformers. This great secession from its ranks was the prelude to important changes in England; but these changes were in the outset accompanied by circumstances which diminished their value and limited their application. It was not strictly a Reformation in religion that occurred in England under the authority of Henry VIII.; it was rather an exchange of Popes. The church gained a new officer, but it was not purged from its old errors: it was emancipated from the Roman supremacy, but it was not restored to the purity of its primitive practice.

By this act, however, the king without intending it, rendered a great service to his country. He removed the key-stone, and destroyed the arch; the great system lost cohesion, men's thoughts were unsettled and their confidence shaken, so that the change was fraught with issues which far exceeded the royal intention. The Bible, moreover, was translated into English and printed, the works of the Reformers were read, and it is not strange that men began, without the king's permission, to enquire into the stability of that foundation on which their hopes for eternity had been based. The church had claimed and exercised, with no sparing measures, the power to decree ceremonies; these seemed destined now to extinguish its life. It had instituted numerous sacraments, and on their validity the safety of souls had been staked. Thus religion had become converted into a



system of external observances, having little, if any, connection with man's spiritual condition. Its duties were for the most part performed by the priest, who, claiming the power of the keys by virtue of a true succession from the apostles, claimed also the important function of admitting men into the kingdom of heaven, or of consigning them to hopeless perdition. How much of all this was truth and how much priestcraft? Let the events of the succeeding times declare.

The Reformation arising out of this condition of things was modified by several circumstances. In England, it began at the head and descended to the extremities; commencing in the first instance with the king, it was carried on by but a small section of the clergy. It was the result of no great conviction pervading the mind of the people, and for some time it had not much of the popular sympathy in its favour. Recent events had diminished the power of the feudal barons, but the influence of feudalism still survived. Dependence for direction on superiors was in this age the normal condition of the English people. On religious questions they were profoundly ignorant. They were fed at the monasteries and entertained at feasts; sometimes their senses were captivated by processions and candlebearings; then they were moved to solemnity by the imposing ceremonials of the church. Was it to be expected under these circumstances that they should doubt the authority of its mission, or question the right of the priest to hold its revenues and direct its machinery.

In the regency of Edward VI., the reforming party were in the majority, and it was now that the Reformation commenced; but his reign was brief, and during

its continuance many obstacles combined to retard the progress of change. The members of the council were divided in sentiment, the people had not yet been roused to a full comprehension of the importance of the new opinions, and a large proportion of the clergy were either indifferent or hostile to them. The connexion between the civil and the ecclesiastical power restricted the freedom and increased the difficulties of the Reformers, for the old faith was so interwoven into the framework of government, that no great organic change could be made in the church without affecting the interests of the state. To these considerations we may add, that the reforming clergy had been trained in Popish universities, where an influence favourable to existing institutions must have been produced on the character of their reasonings and the conclusions of their judgment, from which it would be difficult at once to emancipate themselves. Hence they attempted, in the first instance, only the outworks of the great stronghold of the Roman superstition. They proceeded by a slow process, and from the nature of the case, as the controversy extended, it became largely absorbed in questions connected with the ceremonies and government of the church. By what Scriptural authority are we required to observe holy days and feasts? Why are the Roman vestments to be used in the consecration of ministers? What is the number of the Christian sacraments? what their efficacy? and by whom are they savingly administered? Is the king's authority in ecclesiastical causes supreme? Is a true church polity composed of bishops, priests, and deacons, with subordination of office and dignity, or of a synod of ministers and



elders, having co-ordinate powers? It was to be expected, that in the discussion of these and similar questions great diversities of opinion would arise, and the Reformers early encountered the difficulty of reconciling the right of private judgment in religion with an entire uniformity of religious practice and belief.

This uniformity, indeed, had been secured in the ancient church by a somewhat logical process. If you deprive men of the right to think at all on religious questions you extinguish at the source all diversities of opinion connected with them. But the Reformers endeavoured to combine two irreconcilable conditions—men must think independently and responsibly, and yet they must think in harmony. For this purpose they prepared formularies and digested articles of faith; but any toleration of opinions at variance with the legal standards had not yet entered into their creed, for they had hitherto failed to perceive that a true unity of the spirit in religious association may subsist amid considerable diversities of doctrinal belief.

Not succeeding in their efforts to secure uniformity by means of creeds and controversies, they resorted to persecution. But let us deal gently with the conduct of these men; their errors were peculiar to the age in which they lived, and it cannot be denied that they performed services to the cause of religion which will ever merit the gratitude of posterity. They revised the canon law, called in the mass books, converted the altars into communion tables, attempting by all the means in their power to purge the creed of the church from its errors, and to bring its practice into a nearer conformity to the simplicity of the primitive times.

But their position was critical and their power limited, hence their course was a compromise with Popery. In the earlier communion and baptismal services for example, many traces of the old superstition were still visible. "Departed saints continued to be commended to God's mercy," and "in baptism a cross was made on the child's forehead and breast, with an adjuration of the devil to go out of him. He was then dipped with trine immersion, clothed with a chrysom or white veil by the minister, and anointed with oil."

But the Reformation, though still imperfect, was in advance of the times. It was not yet rooted in the sympathy of the people, and so far its establishment could not be depended upon. Hitherto little had been permanently established, but much had been unsettled. Moreover men had begun to *think* upon religious questions, and to discuss them with freedom; and herein was the great service rendered by the Reformers during the brief reign of Edward VI.

Edward died too soon for his country, and was succeeded on the throne by his sister. Mary was by descent and education a papist, by nature a bigot and a persecutor. From inclination, therefore, as well as from considerations of public policy, she at once determined on the suppression of the new opinions; and by an exertion of the *royal supremacy* in ecclesiastical affairs, of which she denied the validity, she again subjected her country to the Roman See.

Her reign was short, but into its narrow compass there was compressed an unparalleled amount of suffering and disaster, so that even in the contemplation of

it at this distance of time Englishmen hang down their heads. A Parliament elected at the commencement of her reign gave the sanction of its authority to the royal determination. The old persecuting statutes of the Plantagenets were revived into more than their ancient activity; but the laws designed by the wisdom of our ancestors, to limit the power of the priesthood and to defeat their rapacity, were either repealed or they ceased to be enforced. Crowds of the most pious and learned of the clergy were expelled from their churches, and numbers of devoted christians were consigned to the flames. Others fled abroad into Protestant countries, where their faith was confirmed and their knowledge was increased, and where, by the discipline of suffering, they learned to endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. What was the effect of all this on the interests of the Protestant religion in this country? The expulsion of a pious pastor, or the martyrdom of an aged christian, victorious over suffering, and loyal to his Saviour in the agonies of death, is an elevating spectacle, appealing to men's sympathies with an eloquence which it is impossible to resist. In every age the blood of the martyrs had been the seed of the church, and this was no exception. So far indeed was Mary from repressing the new opinions by the vigour of her proceedings, that she rooted them more deeply in the affections of the people.

Of the most prominent advocates of the reformed religion in the late reign, some, through fear, had gone back to the old superstition; others had fled and were residing abroad; many were in prison; not a few had already perished in the flames; and others had been



subjected to cruel tortures, not accepting deliverance, that they too might obtain a better resurrection. At this time, the prospects of the Reformers were gloomy in the extreme, for amid all this community in suffering, they were distracted by differences among themselves.

The deposed bishops were appealed to, and Ridley, then on the eve of his martyrdom, endeavoured to compose their distractions. "I love you, dear hearts," said he, "though you have taken it otherwise, without cause. I am going before you to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." But the earnest appeals of the good man failed to effect their purpose. He could not convince them of their errors, but he could pray for their enlightenment, and he desired them to pray one for another.

The English refugees who had fled to Frankfort had been admitted into a partnership in a French church. The two congregations were to meet at different hours, and before entering into possession, the English were to subscribe the French confession, and to adopt a simple ritual. They were not to answer aloud after the minister, nor to use the litany and surplice, and they agreed that they would avoid all quarrels about ceremonies.

Several learned divines connected with a similar congregation at Strasburg were alarmed by this departure from the exact pattern of king Edward's service book. "Should they deviate from it at this time, they apprehended they should seem to condemn those at home who were now sealing it with their blood, and give occasion to their adversaries to charge them with

inconstancy." These views were supported by the authority of Dr. Cox, who had been the tutor of king Edward VI.; but they were opposed by John Knox, the celebrated Scotch reformer, and by the venerable author of "The Book of Martyrs."

In this posture of affairs, the congregation at Frankfort resolved to ask the advice of John Calvin, then pastor of the church at Geneva. Having perused the English service book, he delivered his opinion on the case submitted to him. "There were many tolerable weaknesses in it which, because at first they could not be amended, were to be suffered; but that it behoved the learned, grave, and godly ministers of Christ to *enterprize farther*, and to set up something more filed from rust and purer." "If religion had flourished till this day in England, many of these things would have been corrected; but since the Reformation is overthrown, and a church is to be set up in another place, where you are at liberty to establish what order is most for edification, I cannot tell what they mean who are so fond of the *leavings of Popish dregs*."

These views were of great force as applied to the detached congregations of Strasburg and Frankfort; but they did not in the opinion of many meet the exact circumstances of the reformed episcopal Church of England.

Out of these events, therefore, there arose a division in the congregation at Frankfort, which was remarkable as the first secession from the church of the Reformation; and from this date the Puritans, as the extreme Reformers were now denominated, began to take a prominent part in the religious discussions of the

country. Such was the position of ecclesiastical affairs when Queen Mary died suddenly, and was succeeded by her sister Elizabeth.

The new Queen proceeded with caution in reversing the religious legislation of the preceding reign. Like her father, she affected great magnificence in her devotions; she was fond of the old rites and ceremonies in which she had been educated, and thought that her brother had stripped religion too much of its ornaments. So far her personal predilections were in favour of the old religion.

But the Pope had pronounced her illegitimate, and supported the claim of the Queen of Scots to the English crown; and again to admit the papal supremacy was to limit the royal prerogative. This consideration had sustained the decision of her father, and it had its weight in the councils of the Tudor Queen.

With the sanction of her Parliament, therefore, she restored the royal supremacy in ecclesiastical causes, but in other respects her religious course was between the church of Rome and the service book of king Edward VI.; her policy in consequence was opposed to the views of the advanced Reformers. The spirit of her father was strong in the queen, and the determinations of her will, gave unity to her purposes and decision to her character. She was assisted moreover by counsellors of great ability in the various departments of her administration. Having accepted with apparent reluctance the important office of head of the church, she determined to enforce uniformity in its services; but recent events had so effectually dislocated the religious machinery of the country that it was now beyond the

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power of the queen, either personally or through the agency of her Parliament, to carry her determination into effect.

In the act of Supremacy, a clause had been inserted empowering the sovereign, by letters patent under the great seal, to create a court of high Commission with spiritual jurisdiction within the realm of England and Ireland, "to visit, reform, redress, order, correct, and amend all errors, heresies, schisms, abuses, contempts, offences, and enormities whatsoever."

In the present posture of religious parties, a difficult task awaited the Commission. It was sustained nevertheless in active exercise of its functions through the whole of Elizabeth's reign. Controversies ensued; in their origin, conducted on both sides by men eminent for their learning and ability; but the disputants failed in their efforts to convince each other. Soon the terrors of the high Commission gave weight to the logic of the church; again uniformity was to be enforced by persecution.

But persecution ever gives tenacity to the principles which it aims to eradicate, and widens the breach which it is intended to heal. By these means union became hopeless, but a large proportion of the country supported the policy of the Queen. Of the clergy many were in favour of the old religion, for at the commencement of the present reign they had adopted articles in convocation supporting the papal supremacy and the real presence in the sacrament and in the sacrifice of the mass. By this act they disburdened their consciences, but they continued to retain their benefices; for out of more than 10,000 ministers having cure of souls, only about 240,

on the accession of Elizabeth, appear to have given up their connexion with their churches. But the Puritans, though an inconsiderable minority and out of favour with the court, were men of piety and determination. The persecutions to which they were subjected gave earnestness to their convictions and intensity to their labours. The Reformation in Scotland had already made great progress, and its principles began now to exert a considerable influence upon the public opinion of this country.

Hitherto no doctrinal questions of importance had been at issue in this controversy. The Reformers were dissatisfied with the government and discipline of the church, and they desired the removal of some of its offensive ceremonies, "because," say they, "being invented by men, though upon a good occasion, yet they had since been abused to superstition and made a necessary part of divine worship. Thus Hezekiah was commended for breaking in pieces the brazen serpent after it had been erected 800 years, and the high places that had been abused to idolatry were commanded to be destroyed. In the New Testament, the washing of the disciples' feet which was practised in the primitive church was, for wise reasons, laid aside, as well as their love feasts. Besides, these rites and ceremonies have occasioned great contentions in the church in every age. The Galatian christians objected to St. Paul that he did not observe the Jewish ceremonies as the other apostles did; and yet he observed them while there was any hope of gaining over weak brethren. For this reason he circumcised Timothy, but when he perceived that men would retain them as *necessary* things in the



church, he called that which before he made *indifferent* wicked and impious; saying that, whoever was circumcised Christ could nothing profit him. The like contentions have been between the Greek and Latin churches in later ages, for which and other reasons it has been thought fit to lay aside these human inventions which have done so much mischief."

Hence the Puritans were for keeping close to the New Testament in the principles of their church government and in the manner of their worship, while the court Reformers maintained "that the practice of the primitive church for the first four or five centuries was a proper standard of church government and discipline, and in some respects a better than that of the Apostles, which was only accommodated to the infant state of the church while it was under persecution," and, therefore, not suited to the exigencies of a national establishment.

Before the close of Elizabeth's reign however, the controversy had taken a wider range. At the University of Cambridge and elsewhere, opposing views on election and final perseverance had begun to prevail, and these were aggravated by the means resorted to for their suppression. On the nature of the sacraments both parties were at first substantially agreed. It was held that they were the signs and seals of grace, but that the grace conveyed was through faith, and was thus contingent on their being rightly received.

But in the manner of their administration there was considerable diversity of opinion and practice. The Puritans objected to kneeling at the communion, to the use of the cross in baptism, and to baptism by women,

all of which they regarded as remains of the old superstition and as opposed to the right administration of the sacraments. Other questions followed. Was the Bishop superior in office and dignity to the Priest or Presbyter in a true ecclesiastical polity? Was Presbyterian ordination to holy orders equivalent to Episcopal? What were the rights of the respective churches with regard to endowments by the State? On these and similar questions the parties to this controversy, as might be supposed, arrived at very different conclusions.

Before the close of Elizabeth's reign, several small sects of Nonconformists had appeared. These differed widely in opinion from the two great classes by whom the Reformation had been hitherto carried on, and from both they received a large measure of abuse.

Of the "Family of Love," little is known but through the accounts of their enemies. They appear to have been a simple and innocent people, living much in retirement, devoting themselves to the cultivation of Christian affections and to a contemplative life. Some obscurity hangs over their doctrinal opinions, but it is clear that they did not come up to the standard of the orthodox belief: a conscientious objection to judicial oaths was among the peculiarities of the sect.

This heresy came within the functions of the high Commission, who assailed it by proclamations containing an unusual amount of ribaldry and abuse. The "Family" were characterised as "crafty, hypocritical, dangerous, and damnable; their doctrines were absurd and fanatical; and their books, lewd, heretical, and seditious."

The Anabaptists were an older and altogether a more

numerous and formidable body. Their chief centre was in Germany, where some fierce enthusiasts under their name held dangerous opinions about the Millenium. In anticipation of the reign of the saints, they disclaimed the authority of the civil magistrate, and involved the country in a war, which was attended by great confusion and bloodshed. In England, the sect appears to have been known before the time of the Reformation, and their views against infant baptism, judicial oaths, and some other received opinions, gained considerable ground among the people in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Their principles, however, were regarded by the Government with feelings of aversion, and under the authority of the writ "*de hæretico comburendo*" several of them were committed to the flames.

Similar treatment awaited the followers of Robert Brown,\* a clergyman of good family, educated at Cambridge, who originated a secession in this reign.

He was a man of considerable ability, but of an imperious and ill-regulated temper. The Brownists did not differ from the Church of England in any important article of faith. According however to their theory of its government, the church is a Christian democracy. They maintained that a true church is confined within the limits of a single congregation, and therefore that one church cannot lawfully exercise any jurisdiction or authority over another. The minister holds his office by the appointment of the members, and may be

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\* Brown is said, in the course of his life, to have been committed to 32 prisons, many of which were so dark that he could not see his hand at noon.



deprived of it by the same authority. The power of admitting persons into communion, or of excluding them from it, is vested in the brotherhood. All prescribed forms of prayer are to be avoided, and laymen may exercise the liberty of prophesying or exhorting in all the assemblies of the faithful.

Several of the Brownists fled from the violence of their persecutors into Holland, where they planted many churches, organised after their favourite model. Many of these persons subsequently emigrated to America, where they were known as the Pilgrim Fathers, and where, after enduring incredible hardships, they founded several States, which have since been renowned for their wealth and intelligence. Here they subsequently copied the worst vices of their English persecutors, by inflicting the most atrocious cruelties upon the Quakers, several of whom they hanged.\* 7

Doubtless these men were endowed with high qualities, and distinguished by many virtues, but we must not conceal that their Christian reputation was tarnished by many crimes. Their conduct to the Aborigines of the country forms one of the darkest pages in the history of colonization. "Hundreds of Indians,

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\* Among no class of religionists, as a class, before the rise of Friends, does religious toleration appear to have been either understood or practised. The Presbyterians in 1645, after giving many reasons against the toleration of Independents, speak on the general question thus—"A toleration! a toleration! we detest and abhor the much endeavoured toleration. Our bowels! our bowels! are stirred within us, and we could even drown ourselves in tears when we call to mind how long and sharp a travail this kingdom hath been in for many years together to bring forth the blessed fruit of a pure and perfect Reformation, and now at last, after all our pangs, and dolours, and expectations, this real and thorough Reformation is in danger of being strangled in the birth by a lawless toleration, that strives to be brought forth before it." (See *Jackson's Life of John Goodwin.*)

X Error. It was the Puritans, not the Pilgrims - See Journal Friends Historical Society - vol. xiii. 27-29.

under the pretended sanction of Christianity, and after solemn religious exercises, they exterminated by fire and sword; and when the assailants, reeking from the slaughter and blackened by the smoke, returned home, they were everywhere received with pious ovations."

During the progress of the religious divisions connected with the reformation, and of the controversies that rose out of them, what was the moral and religious condition of the great body of the people? To remedy an existing scarcity, the bishops had admitted into the ministry sundry artificers and others "not brought up to learning," including some that were of base occupation. The convocation in consequence issued an admonition, forbidding all persons under the degree of a Master of Arts, to preach or to expound the Scriptures. Yet so great was the religious destitution in some districts at this time, that the admonition could not be carried into effect. In many places there was no preaching nor reading so much as a homily for months together, and in others it was hard to find persons to baptize the young, or to bury the dead. To remedy these evils, the Puritan party in the church instituted their assemblies for prophesyings. These meetings were conducted according to specified regulations, and were designed by the clergy for the mutual instruction and edification of themselves and their people. They were supported by the Archbishop of Canterbury, but the Queen, who had a rooted aversion to preaching, determined on their suppression.

On her accession to the crown of England, a difficult task had awaited Elizabeth; but in her political administration, success had crowned her efforts, and on her death

she left behind her a high reputation for practical sagacity. Her ecclesiastical policy, however, had altogether failed. From the course of time and the progress of opinion, the re-establishment of Popery had been rendered more difficult, but the Reformation had receded. She had failed to reconcile the contending parties, and the prevailing controversies had taken a wider range, and become more embittered. A great opportunity of healing the wounds of the church had passed away, and the character of the new king gave no promise of a more cheering future. From the accession of James all parties had grounds of hope, but in the end they were all disappointed. Born of Roman Catholic parents, and baptized according to the ritual of that church, he had since been strictly educated in the opinions of the Scottish Reformers. To these, however, on attaining the English crown, he speedily renounced his allegiance. Deep in the knowledge of divinity, and profoundly skilled in kingcraft, he decided to review the religion of his subjects and to heal their distractions. For this important office he had very indifferent qualifications: he was cunning and pedantic, weak, prejudiced, and unprincipled; and whilst entertaining high notions of the prerogatives of his office, he was little affected by its duties and responsibilities.

Soon after his arrival in England, he issued a proclamation "touching a meeting for the hearing and determining of things pretended to be amiss in the church." Over this conference he presided in person. It was held at Hampton Court, and continued its sittings for three days, during which the various questions at issue between the Puritans and the Bishops were brought



under discussion. It failed however in its main purpose of restoring harmony to the church, but it effectually opened the eyes of the Puritans as to the character of the royal intentions; and henceforth men began to treat the schisms of the Reformation as permanent and incurable, and the several parties drifted into new relations towards each other. Scarcely any concessions were made to the scruples of the Puritans, but a proclamation commanding strict conformity was issued, and the usual consequences followed—"many of the clergy were silenced; some were imprisoned; their flocks were irritated; the estrangement on both sides was grievously increased, and the lawfulness of separating from the Church of England began at length to be generally discussed."

Deprived of hope by the conduct of the king, the puritans began to despair of their country. Disappointed in their expectations of relief, and harassed by new persecutions, many of them now sought that freedom and peace on the shores of America which they could not enjoy in their native land.

The first generation of Reformers had nearly passed away, and they were succeeded by men trained after another fashion. A new order of divines obtained the chief influence in the church. Meanwhile piety was in decay. The Court was immoral, and all seriousness was treated with contempt. At once to arrest the progress of puritan opinions and to silence the objections of the papists against the strictness of the reformed religion, the king published "a declaration to encourage recreations and sports on the Lord's day." About this time the doctrinal questions determined in the synod of Dordt



began to find their way into England, and the sermons were filled with discussions on predestination, universality, efficacy, resistibility, or irresistibility of God's grace.

Laud now rising into a position of influence in the established church, took the side of "free grace" in this controversy, and his party began to teach other opinions, which had not been before received by the church of the Reformation. The Lord's supper is not only a sacrament, it is also a sacrifice, the communion table is therefore an altar, and it is to be placed "altar wise." Images of Christ himself and of the prophets, apostles, martyrs, and confessors, are to be introduced into churches. The abuse of these is to be reformed, but their use is good and laudable. Regeneration is conferred in baptism, and all baptized persons are thus introduced into a state of grace and acceptance with God. While Laud was thus leading the church back over the road on which since the Reformation it had been endeavouring, though often feebly and falteringly to advance, the king was prudently looking round among the Catholic powers to provide a wife for his son. The negotiations for this end with the Pope and the court of Spain were not ultimately ratified, but they proceeded far enough to prove, if proof were wanting, that neither the church of the Reformation nor the Protestant succession were very safely enshrined in the heart and conscience of the king. About this time religious and political considerations became united by singular affinities; Laud, the advocate of "Free Grace" in theology, became the great supporter of despotism in government, whilst the puritans, trained in a religious creed not remarkable for its expansiveness, were the

most prominent advocates of civil and religious freedom. James died before he had completed the arrangements for the marriage of his son. According to the estimate of his own times he had been eminently a religious man, but posterity has done him justice by a more accurate analysis of his character. Whilst making great pretensions to piety, his conduct was habitually immoral, whilst professing with much grimace and solemnity his deep attachment to the Protestant religion, he secretly devoted all his powers to bring about the marriage of his son to a devoted adherent of the church of Rome. His character throughout was hollow and insincere, and the moral influence of his court was pernicious to the country.

The conduct of James to the puritans had early excited their suspicion, but before the end of his reign they had begun to regard it with feelings of intense hatred and disgust. Hopeless of relief they now spoke of their wrongs in bold and uncompromising language; the court endeavoured to repress this freedom by measures of impolitic harshness. Thus the relations between the king and the Nonconformists were embittered, their sufferings, however, excited sympathy and gained them new adherents. In their treatment, not only had their religious scruples been disregarded, their civil rights also had been violated, and they now began to band themselves together in active hostility to the principles of the government. The disputes which had been carried on in the two preceding reigns increased in violence and became more political in their character on the accession of Charles I.

The young king was by nature proud and inflexible;

he had moreover been educated in the most extravagant notions of the royal prerogative. The principles of the puritans he regarded with aversion, and from the commencement of his reign he resolved to watch their proceedings with the utmost vigilance.

On the other hand the puritans had every reason to distrust the policy of the king; for his queen, to whom he was devotedly attached, was a rigid Romanist, and the influence of Laud, which was considerable in the preceding reign, had now become supreme.

The principles of the Reformation henceforth became increasingly unpopular in the church. Doctrines nearly allied to the Romish superstition had begun to be openly taught, and many of its antiquated ceremonies were again restored. To secure a rigid conformity to the new ceremonial, the court of Star Chamber was organised, and it soon became the engine of incredible cruelty.

The book of Sports, which had been issued but not enforced in the preceding reign, was again reprinted with a declaration subjoined by the king, as he stated, "out of pious care for the service of God," commanding its publication in all the parish churches of his realm. A few ministers of puritan opinions still retained their benefices in the church, some of these were now silenced because they refused to be made accessory to the desecration of the sabbath by giving their sanction to the royal declaration. The sports, as might have been anticipated, descended into noisy and tumultuous revels, they were attended by drunkenness, quarrelings, and even murders. Men of loose morals took refuge in the practice of the court, and pleaded the royal sanction for



their indulgences ; whilst others of honourable character and virtuous lives were stigmatised as puritans and enemies of the king. Popery was now openly countenanced, and its adherents were conciliated. Through the influence of the queen and the divinity of Laud, again the two churches seemed destined to make a near approach to each other. Many of the English clergy were men of learning, but they were little moved by the responsibilities of their office and profoundly ignorant of practical religion. Their sermons were filled with discussions on ceremonies or with scholastic niceties connected with questions which minister nothing to "Godly edifying."

They ceased to be the utterances of earnest men, they raised no sympathy in other hearts, and the pulpit lost its power. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the convulsions which followed vast numbers forsook their pastors and became absorbed by the several factions into which the English democracy was soon after divided.

The puritan clergy too had changed. The generation who had fought hand to hand with the papacy, and whose lives had been spent amid cruel sufferings, in a vain endeavour to purge the church from the dregs of the papal superstition, had now passed away. They were succeeded by the democratic puritans of the commonwealth. These men inherited their name but not their spirit. They were Calvinists, and preached against Laud's theory of free grace, but their opinions on good works led them to the verge of Antinomianism. They became impatient under persecution, and leaving the great questions of "fixed fate and foreknowledge

absolute" for the present unsolved, they began to discuss the grounds of the constitutional maxim "that the king can do no wrong." They looked back on the experience of the Jewish theocracy, and finding there some precedents that did not square with that ancient maxim, they dismissed their scruples and placed themselves in active hostility to their sovereign. In the distractions that followed these men rendered important services to the cause of the Commonwealth. All attempts at reconciliation having failed, the civil war commenced. The Parliamentary army was compounded of curious ingredients—it was the common refuge of all who were discontented, either with the civil or the religious administration of the government. Unruly London apprentices with short hair, country farmers, Parliamentary patriots, and democratic puritans, stood side by side in the same ranks. Doubtless there was in all this much false zeal and some dangerous fanaticism; but these were to a great extent neutralized by earnest patriotism, and directed by no small amount of energy and practical sagacity. The civil war was essentially a rising of the untrained manhood of the nation against the mis-government and despotism of its constituted authorities. In the parliamentary army all questions of social status were held subordinate to merit, for energy and ability rose to distinction in whomsoever they were found. Cromwell was a brewer and occupied a farm; Jones, his brother-in-law, had been servant to a private gentleman; Joyce, who carried off the king, had recently been a common working tailor; Colonel Pride, who purged the House of Commons of the malignants, was originally a drayman; Skippon rose



from the position of a common soldier without education to the rank of commander in chief of the army in Ireland, and member of the council of government. Many of the founders of the religious sects that arose out of the conflicts of these extraordinary times were also of mean extraction. Hitherto, alike by court and clergy, all "mean and mechanick" persons had been regarded as unfit for any function in church or state. But the governing powers had proved either unequal to their duties or unfaithful to their mission, and the people now for the first time aroused from the sleep of centuries, proceeded to discharge as best they might the new responsibilities that under these circumstances devolved upon them. Many influences had been powerfully at work, expanding the mind and increasing the intelligence of the people.—The decay of feudalism, the discovery of printing, the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the vulgar tongue and their more general circulation, the freedom with which religion had been discussed, the persecutions to which dissenters had been subjected,—all these had contributed to increase the discontent, and to give a new direction to the popular sentiments. The ground was now, for the first time, fairly broken up, and the plants and weeds that "were indigenous to the soil sprang up together with a rank and irrepressible fertility."

Hitherto the spirit of religious inquiry had been kept alive by the efforts used to suppress it. Now, the shackles of past ages of intolerance were effectually broken. The nation was torn by intestine strifes, and numbers perished from the scourge of war. These calamities loosened men's attachment to the world, by

shewing the precarious tenure of life, and all that pertains to it. Their thoughts were stirred by the greatness of the occasion, for solemn issues were impending, and many began now to seek after those substantial and enduring consolations which are only to be found in true religion. But where was true religion itself to be found? The infallibility of Rome was the stronghold of grievous errors. The reformed church of England had retained many of them, and its hierarchy even now was favourable to a still nearer connection with the old superstition.

The puritans had lost their early vitality, and were less disposed to emulate the simple piety of their ancestors than to protect their rights from the encroachments of the king.

The sectaries had become churches militant in a double sense ; sometimes fighting, sometimes praying. Now, enforcing the duty of resisting tyrants in earnest discourses delivered in loud tones in the market-place—then, illustrating their precepts by the energy of their practice in the field. In the language of an able writer (*Colquhoun*), “ Men whose lives were infamous sounded the depths of predestination and election. The cold-hearted churchman and the hot-headed sectary appeared in the lists with arms burnished and fence acquired by training ; and as civil confusion increased there was no place which was not converted into an arena. Men poured into the church and the meeting house, not to humble themselves or to pray, but to witness a fight between two controversialists, to watch the turn of the conflict, and to applaud the victor. No bull-baiting ever delighted the Spaniard, no cock-pit or rat-hunt

ever charmed the Englishman more than these combats which went on week by week during the confusion of the civil wars; in parish churches, and city churches, where hard faced men sat with eager eyes, watching in the disputes and mingling in the fray.\*

Sincere enquirers were perplexed by these contentions of rival sects, and being weary of polemic strife, they lost confidence in their religious teachers.

"Many of these persons withdrew from all the acknowledged forms of public worship, and devoted themselves to a diligent search of the Holy Scriptures, with prayer for right direction in the path of duty, frequently meeting in select companies for the worship of God and for mutual edification." Among this class the preaching of the early Quakers found a ready entrance, and many of them were among the first converts of the new society.

Such was the aspect of the religious world when George Fox for the first time looked out upon it. Among both the ministers and the members of every section of the church, we find, combined with much restless activity, great spiritual deadness. True religion is a life created in man, to be strengthened by discipline. At this time it was regarded by many as a system of outward observances, very remotely if at all connected

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\*Nor were these animated but uncanonical proceedings confined to the times of the civil wars, during which there was no Established church,—they extended into the period of the Commonwealth.—This fact is to be carefully borne in mind in judging of the character of the interruptions of the worship in the national churches, for which some of the early Friends have been severely blamed by public writers not adequately informed of, or not sufficiently taking into account the exceptional and extraordinary circumstances under which they took place.

with the spiritual life. The clergy seldom preached, many of them were personally immoral, and not a few scandalously licentious. The dissenters were absorbed in political factions, or engaged in polemic strife.

The right of private judgment was exercised in great liberty of speech, and everywhere men were more concerned about an acquaintance 'with the letter that killeth' than with 'the spirit which giveth life.' Beneath all this turmoil there was doubtless hidden no small amount of earnest piety. But in his search among the professors Fox did not find it, so he turned away mournfully from all sects and parties and "became a stranger to all."



## LECTURE SECOND.

## THE EARLY FRIENDS AND THE COMMONWEALTH TIMES.

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"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

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WE come now to the consideration of that phase of the religious phenomena of the Reformation which was exhibited by Quakerism in its first life; and in connexion with this enquiry, it will be needful to refer as briefly as may be, to the character and labours of George Fox; for though the society of which he was the founder ranked among its early converts, many earnest, and not a few, able and learned men, yet the influence of Fox was so powerful, his idiosyncrasies were so marked, and so interwoven with the whole system of its doctrine and practice, that nowhere is genuine Quakerism more accurately delineated than in the pages of his remarkable journal.\*

He was born at Drayton in the Clay, in Leicestershire, in 1624, about one year before the death of James I. His father, Christopher Fox, was an honest man; and though a weaver, he appears to have been in comfortable circumstances in life. His mother, Mary

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\*A work of which Sir James Macintosh says: "It is one of the most extraordinary and instructive narratives in the world, which no reader of competent judgment can peruse without revering the virtue of the writer."

Lago, was of the "stock of the martyrs," and "was a woman accomplished above most of her degree." Both his parents were members of the established church, and they brought up their children "in the way and worship of the nation." From a youth this boy seems to have been remarkable for his grave and pious deportment. The qualities of his future character were shadowed forth, even in his infant years. "When I came" says he, "to eleven years of age, I knew pureness and righteousness, for while a child I was taught how to walk to be kept pure."—"The Lord taught me to be faithful in all things, and to act faithfully in two ways, viz., inwardly to God, and outwardly to man, and to keep to yea and nay in all things. He shewed me that though the people of the world have mouths full of deceit and changeable words, yet that my words should be few and savory, seasoned with grace."

As he grew up, his relations remarking the tendency of his mind, inclined to educate him for a "priest," but others persuaded to the contrary, whereupon, he was put out to a man who was a shoemaker by trade, but who also was a grazier and a dealer in wool.

God had indeed a ministry for this inward, still, observing youth, but he was to be prepared for it not by scholastic training, but by the discipline of suffering, and through the agony of many strange experiences.

When about 19 years of age, he received what he regarded as a divine intimation, which determined the course of his future life. "Thou seest how young people go together into vanity, and old people into the earth; thou must forsake all, both young and old, and keep out of all, and be a stranger to all." On this he

left home, broke off all familiarity or fellowship with old and young; he was afraid even of the company of professors; he found not the vitality and savor of true godliness about them, for he was "sensible," he says, "that they possessed not what they professed." Then mighty troubles came upon him, and strong temptations to despair. Like Bunyan's Pilgrim, Fox might have "got out of the mire on that side of the slough which was next to his own house," but his cry was for deliverance through the right channel; his aim was for the wicket gate. Into hollow trees and other solitary places, he retired, while under this exercise, to fast and to pray. Here his Bible was his constant companion. During this struggle sometimes he kept himself "retired in his chamber, then he walked solitary in the chase." But his temptations grew more and more, and his despair increased. He turned his thoughts upon the past, and brought the actions of his life in review before him. Was he ever so before? Was this the penalty of some unforgiven sin? Had he incurred guilt by forsaking his parents, and so brought himself into darkness and despair? He removed to London, and looked round among the great professors of the city, but here his spirit found no rest, for he found them in the dark, and he "saw all, young and old, where they were." He returned home to his relations, who advised him to marry. He replied, "he was yet but a youth, and must get wisdom." Others were in favour of his entering the army, but he had no foes to war with but those of his own soul. In this condition he went for comfort to many a "priest," but he found no comfort there. Some of these interviews are especially characteristic



of the parties and of the times in which they occurred. "I went," he says, "to another ancient 'priest' at Mancetter in Warwickshire, and reasoned with him about the ground of despair and temptations, but he was ignorant of my condition; he bade me take tobacco and sing psalms. Tobacco was a thing I did not love, and psalms I was not in a state to sing. He told my troubles and sorrows to his servants, which grieved me that I had opened my mind to such a one. Then I heard of a priest living about Tamworth who was accounted an experienced man, and I went seven miles to see him, but I found him only like an empty hollow cask. I heard also of one Dr. Cradock of Coventry, and went to him. I asked him the grounds of temptation and despair, and how troubles came to be wrought in man. He asked me who was Christ's father and mother? I told him Mary was his mother, and that he was supposed to be the son of Joseph but that he was the Son of God. Now as we were walking together in his garden, the alley being narrow, I chanced in turning to set my foot on the side of a bed, at which the man was in a rage, as if the house had been on fire. Thus all our discourse was lost, and I went away in sorrow, worse than I was when I came."

Still intent on finding relief from the burdens that oppressed his soul, he consulted another 'priest' in high account, one Macham, but again, his physician, ignorant of the true remedy, failed to reach the seat of the disease. "He would needs give me some physic," says Fox, "and I was to have been let blood, but they could not get one drop of blood from me, my body being as it were dried up with griefs and troubles,



which were so great upon me that I could have wished I had never been born, or that I had been born blind, that I might never have seen wickedness or vanity, and deaf, that I might never have heard vain and wicked words, or the Lord's name blasphemed." Weary and sick at heart, the earnest young man turned away from his counsellors ; miserable comforters had they all been to him ; not one had truly comprehended his condition, but through the gloom that long had covered his soul, even now some rays of light were faintly breaking. It was to this period of George Fox's life that Carlyle refers in the following characteristic extract from his *Sartor Resartus*.

"The temple of immensity wherein as man, he had been sent to minister, was full of holy mystery to him. The clergy of the neighbourhood, the ordained watchers and interpreters of that same holy mystery, listened with unaffected tedium to his consultations, and advised him, as the solution of such doubts, to drink beer and smoke tobacco. For what end were their tithes levied and eaten ; for what were their shovel hats scooped out ; and their surplices and cassock aprons girt on ; and such a church repairing and chaffering and organing and other racketing held over that spot of God's earth, if man were but a patent digester and the belly with its adjuncts the grand reality. Fox turned away from them with tears, and a sacred scorn, back to his leather parings and his Bible. Mountains of incumbrance had been heaped over that spirit, but it was a spirit, and it would not be buried there. Through long days and nights of silent agony it struggled and wrestled with a man's force to be free. How its prison mountains

heaved and swayed tumultuously as the giant spirit shook them to this hand and that, and emerged into the light of heaven."

From early life the mind of George Fox had been profoundly moved by the powers of the world to come. Hitherto he had wandered earnestly but aimlessly from place to place, groping his way through the surrounding darkness, to higher degrees of light and knowledge. At length he began to apply the light he already had to the discharge of his daily duty, and the tone of his mind was strengthened by the exercise. While others were sporting and feasting on public occasions, he would look out poor widows from house to house, relieving their wants by gifts of money, and their sorrows by the sympathy of a loving heart.

He was now in the 23rd year of his age. Great events had recently been taking place around him. Laud and Strafford had been executed, the nation had been engaged in a frightful civil war, decisive battles had been fought, the church had been overthrown, the king was a prisoner, the monarchy was in ruins. But he heeded not the conflict, for to him it was only the striving of the "potsherds of the earth against the potsherds of the earth."

He too had been engaged in mighty struggles. In the valley of humiliation he had fought with Apollyon and had been "hard put to it." He had passed through the darkness of the shadow of death, and heard its doleful voices, but his deliverance drew near, for as the day dawned "he began to discover deep things out of darkness, and light out of the shadow of death."

In his troubles and exercises he now experienced

frequent intermissions ; for he was sometimes brought into such a heavenly joy that he thought he was in Abraham's bosom. He had consulted eminent divines, but the malady of his soul was too deep for syllogisms. It was when all his hopes in all men were gone, so that he had nothing outwardly to help him, that he found Christ, who alone had the key, and could open the door of life and light to him.—Well might his heart leap for joy, for to him it was the advent of that Spirit of truth which leads into all truth. Thus this great reality, the spiritual presence of Christ in the hearts of his people, which in after life was his constant theme and the source of his deepest consolations, was opened to his comprehension. In his difficulties, he now took refuge in a holier guidance, in his despair he was comforted by the help and presence of his God. Others might regard this as a delusion, but to him it was a blessed reality—having important practical bearings on his daily life and conduct, and it speedily became the centre round which other sacred truths began to group themselves. He saw that all was to be done in and by Christ, and that his troubles and temptations had been designed for the trial of his faith and the establishment of his confidence in God. Through Him the burden of his sins had been taken away. Tears of joy dropped from his eyes, for he had been brought through the ocean of darkness and death. He had glimpses of the great love of God in Christ, and was filled with admiration at the infinitude of it. When his soul was veiled in darkness faith became his sure and steadfast anchor, and he could endure all things now as seeing Him who is invisible. The Holy Spirit



was in him as "a refiner with fire, and as a fuller with soap." New desires after holiness were created, and his spiritual discernment was increased. That which in the word of life he had seen and handled, he began henceforth to declare to others, that they too might be made partakers of that "fellowship which, through the Eternal Spirit, is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

He now began to see more clearly into some things which hitherto had sorely perplexed his thoughts. How was it that all Christians were believers, both Protestants and Papists? This could not be, for all believers were born of God, and had passed from death unto life, and none were true believers but such as these.

As he was walking thoughtfully in the fields on another occasion, it was "opened" to him "that being bred at Oxford and Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ." At this he wondered, for he had been educated a church-man, and it "struck at the priests' ministry," and was contrary to the common belief of the people. As he did not live in an age of church building, he might not have witnessed the ceremony of consecrating an ecclesiastical edifice, but he had been taught, on entering the church, to remove his hat and to tread reverently as on holy ground. But now it was "opened" to him that "God who made the world, did not dwell in temples made with hands \* \* \* but that his people were his temple, and that he dwelt in them."

No wonder that Nathaniel Stevens the priest of his parish began to disapprove of Fox's discoveries, for such "openings" were not calculated to increase the con-



fidence of the people in his teachings, or in the stability of the episcopal system, which was then seriously endangered.

For some years Fox had been for the most part from home. Frequently had his friends endeavoured to stay his proceedings, and to bring him into a more regular and settled life. But he was not to be moved from his purpose, for, as he believed, God had laid his hand upon him, and ordained him a prophet to the nations. Except in obedience to this call, and in the discharge of his duty, his soul could find no rest.

He heard a voice they could not hear,  
Which said he must not stay;  
He saw a hand they could not see,  
Which beckoned him away.

He had been brought to an understanding of his own spiritual condition, he was now to speak to the condition of others, and from this time his life becomes a scene of ceaseless labour or of patient suffering.

Let us glance briefly at the next few years of his ministry. The review will bring us some knowledge of the rise of Quakerism, of the character of Fox's early labours, and of the peculiarities of the times in which he lived. He began his travels as a minister of Christ in 1647, by a visit to a woman in Lancashire who had fasted 22 days, and whom he found under a temptation. On his way he "declared truth" among the professors at Dukinfield and Manchester. After his return he preached at a great meeting of Baptists and Separatists at Broughton in Leicestershire, where the "power of the Lord was over them all." At a meeting in Mansfield he prayed with such fervour and effect, that the

place seemed to be shaken where the people were assembled. He passed on through Derbyshire and Leicestershire where several "tender people were convinced." On visiting Warwickshire he found large numbers praying and expounding the Scriptures in the open fields. The Bible was handed to him and he expounded the 5th chapter of Matthew, and opened their inward state; which set them on fierce contentions, and they separated. At Leicester a great meeting was held for a dispute, wherein Presbyterians, Baptists, Independents, and Common Prayer men were all concerned. The meeting was in a steeple house, and Fox was moved to go amongst them. The priest was in the pulpit, and the disputants in pews in the body of the house. A woman propounded a question out of Peter, "What that birth was, viz.: 'A being born again of incorruptible seed, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever?'" The priest answered her in the language of Paul, "I suffer not a woman to speak in the church," whereupon Fox stepped up to him and questioned him on the nature of a true church. "Dost thou call this house a church, or dost thou call this mixed multitude a church? The church is the pillar and ground of truth, made up of living stones, living members, a spiritual household which Christ is the head of. But he is not the head of a mixed multitude, or of an old house, made up of lime, stones, and wood." "This" says Fox, "set them all on fire, the priest came down out of his pulpit, the professors out of their pews, and the dispute was marred." Howbeit, several were convinced that day, including the woman that asked the question and her family. We next find him

preaching repentance in the vale of Beavor, where he made many converts. In Nottingham he met with a company of "shattered Baptists, and the Lord's power wrought mightily and gathered many of them." At Eaton, near Derby, a meeting of Friends had been already established.

All sorts of services and duties began now to crowd upon him.—He preached the Gospel wherever he came—he visited public hirings and admonished justices not to oppress servants in their wages,—he cried for equity in courts of justice,—he warned those who kept houses for public entertainment not to promote drunkenness,—he testified against feasts, may-games, sports, plays, and shews,—he charged parents and teachers to bring up their children and servants in the fear of the Lord.

He addressed tradesmen in fairs and markets, and declared against their deceitful merchandisings. Through all its transformations and disguises he traced out evil and denounced it. But it was the earthly spirit of the clergy that stirred in him the most uncompromising antagonisms. To him the sound of the church-bell was harsh and inharmonious. There was the ring of the money changers in its softest tones. It was the market bell that gathered the people, "together that the priest might set forth his wares to sale."—"Oh the vast sums of money that are gotten by the trade they make of selling the Scriptures and by their preaching, from the highest bishop to the lowest priest. What trade else in the world is comparable to it?"

In 1649 he visited Nottingham, where, for interrupting the episcopal service, he was committed to prison. He was sent to the house of the Sheriff, where he



lodged and had great meetings. At these meetings some persons of considerable condition in the world were present, and the Lord's power appeared eminently among them.

At Mansfield Woodhouse during service he "declared truth to priest and people." Here he was cruelly beaten by the congregation with sticks and Bibles.

At Coventry, Atherstone, and Market Boston, similar treatment awaited him.

At Derby he was imprisoned for twelve months, but his time was not unoccupied. He wrote letters to the clergy, magistrates, justices, and others in authority. Whilst in confinement his jailor became a convert, as did also a devout soldier, who came to visit him, and "who saw to the end of fighting," and laid down his arms. Before his liberation he wrote a lament over Derby on account of its wickedness, and addressed an epistle to "tender convinced persons." He moved by way of Lichfield, where he pronounced a woe against the city, into Yorkshire. Here Richard Farnsworth, James Naylor, and William Dewsbury, three of the first ministers of the society, "received the truth." At Selby he made the acquaintance of Captain Pursloe, who introduced him to Justice Hotham, a "tender man who had some knowledge of God's working in his heart," and both of them were convinced. From York, where several others joined him, he passed into Cleveland. Here he says "God had an humble people who continue a meeting unto this day, sitting under the teaching of Christ their Saviour."

At Slath, to which he had travelled through deep snow, he had large meetings, and "a great convincement



there was." Among those who here received the truth was a man of 100 years of age. The chief constable, and a clergyman whose name was Philip Scaife, were also among the converts. Of the latter he says, "him did the Lord afterwards make a free minister of his free gospel."

In this district he was engaged in several disputes with the clergy and other public teachers, after which he pursued his way to the east of Yorkshire, where he held his meetings in large houses. This practice was then thought strange, so he was desired to speak in the churches. At this time ecclesiastical buildings were put to strange uses. On several occasions Fox appears to have been invited by the minister to take the pulpit, and the bell was rung to assemble the people. At Pickering even the sessions were held in the "steeple house." Justice Robinson was chairman. Fox had a meeting in an adjoining schoolroom, which was attended by abundance of "priests and professors." Four chief constables were convinced, as was "Justice Robinson's priest," who was very loving and offered Fox his pulpit, but he declined to occupy it. Here he was joined by another clergyman, who travelled up the country with him and arranged a meeting for him in a church. He did not accept the offer of the building, but in the grave-yard he delivered his views on idol temples, priests, tithes, augmentations, ceremonies, and traditions, and "opened other matters largely among them." "All," he says, "were quiet, and many were convinced, blessed be the Lord."

Still accompanied by "Mr. Boyes, the ancient priest," he travelled on to another town, where he

addressed a large meeting from the top of a haystack.

Wherever he went he left traces of his presence. He visited Oram, and met with a favourable reception. At night he reached Partington, and as his manner was, he warned priest and people to repent and turn to the Lord. Here he was evil entreated by the inhabitants; none would give him a lodging, darkness came on, and it was winter, but he walked out of the town, and being weary with travelling, sat down among furze bushes and remained till break of day.

In the morning he was seized by a rude multitude and taken before a magistrate, but was immediately liberated. Again he returned to the town and delivered his message, which many now received. "Every where he braved his persecutors, but without bravado."

Early in 1652 he returned into some parts of Yorkshire which he had previously visited, holding large meetings in divers places, at most of which a "mighty brokenness among the people" was visible. By this time several persons who had received the truth on a former visit had begun to declare it to others, and some of these now frequently joined him in his travels. Passing into the West Riding he visited Wakefield and Bradford, and proceeded thence through Bingley and Colne to Marsden. Here he refers briefly in his Journal to the following circumstance:—"As we travelled we came near a great hill called Pendle Hill, and I was moved of the Lord to go up to the top of it, which I did with some difficulty, it was so very steep and high." From the summit of this hill he beheld stretched out before him the fertile fields of Craven, and as his eye swept on, Ingleborough and Whernside came into view;—the

distant peaks of the Westmoreland and Cumberland mountains were visible in the dim horizon, and following the course of the Ribble, the coast of Lancashire and the Irish sea might be seen stretching far away into the west.

From the top of this hill, he says, "the Lord shewed me in what places he had a people to be gathered." The district over which he now for the first time cast his eyes was destined to become the great stronghold of early Quakerism.

In many respects his first visit to it was remarkable, and the results that flowed out of it furnish matter for one of the most interesting chapters in the history of religious revivals. The country was mountainous, and for the most part barren. It was difficult of access, having few roads, and at that time no wheeled carriages. For nearly a thousand years it had been occupied by a race of men whose condition had been little affected by the changes that had swept over other parts of the country. They were genuine Anglo-Saxon yeomen, and distinguished by all the independence, energy, and tenacity which characterise that race. From Jervaulx in the east to Furness in the west, no abbey or priory church had ever been known in the district. In social rank the inhabitants were equal, they had few paupers among them, and no feudal servitude had yet impaired their manhood.

In obedience to what he regarded as the pointing of the heavenly finger, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, into this district Fox now bent his way. He was accompanied by Richard Farnsworth, one of his early converts, now a minister. Their road lay for

the most part through a barren and mountainous region, and the first night the travellers drew together a bundle of ferns and lay on a common. The next day Farnsworth returned home, and Fox travelled alone. On arriving at the market town of Wensleydale, after the priest had finished his service, he declared the word of life unto the people and then passed on, warning men every where and preaching the everlasting gospel to them. Here Major Bousfield and several others received his message. Next day he assembled with a body of Separatists at Justice Benson's, near Sedbergh. This was the place he had seen in his vision on Pendle hill, where a people came forth to meet him in white apparel. The justice and his congregation were convinced, and a flourishing meeting was established in the neighbourhood. Gervase Benson (the justice), John Blakeling, and others of the congregation, became active promoters of the new opinions. On Whit Wednesday of the same week, there was a large fair to be held at Sedbergh. To this place as to a common centre would be drawn the scattered population of a district containing some 300 miles of superficial area. The opportunity was not to be lost,—it was a singular but an important gathering. There were usually here drawn together country farmers and their farm servants, "for it was," says Fox, "a great hiring." There were mothers and daughters and school-boys surrounding the market stalls engaged in noisy merchandisings. There were old Cromwellian officers and troopers just returned from their campaigns. Here too might be seen the episcopal clergy of the neighbouring hamlets, then clad in Presbyterian livery, engaged with Independent ministers and separatists in earnest



discussions on the strange aspects of the times.

In company with Justice Benson in this motley assemblage Fox too was conspicuous. In the morning he had a meeting at Richard Parrot's house in the town; then "he declared truth through the fair." The effect produced was great. The large church was offered to him, but he refused to enter that edifice. In the church-yard there grew two yew trees, then in the vigour of their meridian greenness. They still stand, but the wrinkles of centuries are upon them, and a few solitary twigs growing out of their decaying trunks are all of life that remains with them. Seventy years before, Giles Withington, M.A., one of the earlier Puritan ministers, incumbent of the church, had preached from this spot to his congregation, after he had been deprived of his living on the ground of non-conformity. Under the branches of these trees, therefore, a bench was erected. There came the people from the fair, and "abundance of priests and professors," and for several hours Fox preached the word of life to them. Captain Ward, Francis Howgill, and several others were convinced.

"The next first-day," he says, "I came to Firbank chapel in Westmoreland, where Francis Howgill and John Audland had been preaching in the morning." This small episcopal chapel was at that time in the possession of the Independents. It is situated on the summit of a conical hill, about five miles from Sedbergh, and is extremely difficult of access. It stands in the centre of a region, dreary in the extreme; for miles in some directions nothing can be seen but barren moorland, and scarcely on any side does a human

habitation meet the view. Adjoining this small chapel is a huge rock, having at its base a spring of water. Up into this great primeval solitude, Fox was followed by more than a thousand people, and refreshing himself with a little water from the stream flowing at his feet, he ascended the rock, and for the space of three hours, fixed the attention and moved the hearts of his remarkable audience. Most of the congregation and all the ministers connected with it were convinced of the truths he communicated. Wherever he went, the wave of spiritual emotion swept after him—conversions amongst all classes began to be counted by hundreds. Nor was the effect a mere temporary excitement; in a large number of instances it resulted in permanently changing the character, and producing those “fruits unto holiness the end whereof is everlasting life.”

At this time, (1652), in the district of which this is the centre, we meet with several of the most remarkable of the early ministers of the society.

From a farmhouse called Sunbiggin, in Orton, came George Whitehead, then 18 years of age, subsequently the friend of William Penn, and excepting Fox the most devoted of the early Quakers. He closed a life of abundant labour and of incredible suffering in London in 1724, the last of his generation, at the advanced age of 87 years. At Underbarrow was born Edward Burrough, the Whitfield of the party, a bold and earnest preacher, who also laboured and suffered without intermission for ten years, and died in Newgate of gaol fever at the age of 27. Out of this district also sprang Francis Howgill, John Audland, John and Thomas Camm, Richard Hubberthorn, Ambrose Rigge, James

Lancaster, John Braithwaite, Samuel Bownas, and many others well known as laborious and successful ministers in the early history of the Quakers.

From Firbank chapel Fox proceeded through Westmoreland and North Lancashire to Ulverston, where he was received by the family of Judge Fell at Swarthmore Hall. Here a meeting was established, and for some time this may be considered as the centre of his operations. He still continued his labours in the Northern counties, sometimes preaching on mountains and in steeple-houses, or it may be disputing with priests, sometimes being praised and sometimes abused and beaten, but through all he pressed on in his mission.

His converts soon began to be counted by thousands. About this time Anthony Pearson, a distinguished justice of the peace, and subsequently the author of a work against tithes, joined him and became one of his ablest supporters, and now also James Parnell, a youth who visited him in Carlisle jail, received the truth, to which he speedily became a martyr, but not till after he had with great effect begun to declare it to others. At this point however we must pause, for new actors now appear on the scene, and the drama becomes too complicated for this sketch.

I have given an outline of a few events connected with the early years of Fox's ministry. It will afford a pretty accurate indication of the character of the man, the results of his labours, and the peculiarities of the times in which he lived. The ministers that now began to flock in increasing numbers to his standard were for the most part men like minded with himself. They, like him, had been brought out of darkness, and

soon they began to publish the method of their deliverance to others. Thus each became the centre of a new circle of operations, and to this end they speedily dispersed themselves over the country.

"About this time," (1654), says Fox, "did the Lord move upon the spirits of many whom he had raised up and sent forth to labour in his vineyard, to travel southward and spread themselves in the service of the gospel, to the eastern, southern, and western parts of the nation, as Francis Howgill and Edward Burrough to London; John Camm and John Audland to Bristol; Richard Hubberthorn and George Whitehead towards Norwich; Thomas Holmes into Wales; and others different ways; for about 60 ministers had the Lord raised up, and now sent abroad out of the north country." For all this there was no special pecuniary provision; the movement was not the result of any preconcerted arrangement. In modern phrase it was a lay agency, for no ecclesiastical authority had laid his hand upon the heads of these men, and consecrated them to specific spheres of labour. Each began to reap after his own fashion, under the direction of the Great Husbandman, in his own portion of the harvest field, and the effect became speedily visible.

It would be interesting to know what the doctrinal opinions of these ministers were, but hitherto Fox had issued no creed. Those who joined his society held many views that were common to all Christians, but they maintained some others which were at that time peculiar to themselves, and these constituted the bond of their union and fellowship one with another.

Men holding such opinions were clearly comprised in



the toleration contained in the Instrument of government under which Cromwell had been recently appointed Protector, for though differing in judgment from the worship and discipline publicly held forth, they "professed faith in God through Jesus Christ."

By direction of a committee of Parliament this short test was afterwards amplified into sixteen propositions setting forth in greater detail the "fundamentals of Christianity," and of these propositions probably there was not one that did not convey a truth believed by the new society.

But there were some other truths in their view equally fundamental, contained in the New Testament, which had not found their way into this catalogue, and it was to these more immediately that Fox and his associates now directed the attention of their hearers. On the manifold and important offices of the Holy Spirit in the great work of man's salvation they were constantly insisting. He was the *Uction* from the Holy One, which teacheth of all things, the *Light* which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world; his office was to convince the *world* of sin no less than to comfort and sanctify the Christian believer, and to be his guide into all truth. In their view the work of the Holy Spirit constitutes the life of all true religion, for it is "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus that maketh free from the law of sin and death." In the spirit the Lord's people have everywhere fellowship one with another. He seals their individual adoption into the heavenly family, and is the appointed medium of communication between the church and its glorified Head.

With the work of the ministry, with the conversion

of the sinner, and the regeneration of the saint, in short, with all that is most precious and most practical in Christian experience they believed that this Spirit is connected by inseparable relationships. But they held that in the first ages of the church the spirituality of the gospel had been obscured by human traditions and ceremonies.

The true position of the Holy Scriptures in the great Christian economy was much enlarged upon in connection with the Spirit's teachings, and on this subject their views were frequently misapprehended. They spake of the Holy Spirit as primary, of the Scriptures as secondary and subordinate, but at all times they reverently accepted their divine inspiration and authority.

As the stream is subordinate to the fountain, so in *dignity* and *office* the Holy Scriptures are subordinate to the source from which they issued, but they taught that their authority as a *rule* is primary and conclusive, and that "whatsoever any do, pretending to the Spirit which is contrary to the Scriptures, is to be accounted and reckoned a delusion of the devil." Fox carried a Bible about with him, and referred to it in his sermons and controversies. In the meeting house near Swarthmore Hall he deposited a folio copy of the Holy Scriptures which still remains; it was chained up for the use of the congregation assembling there. He refused indeed to accept the glosses and interpretations of the schoolmen, but to the plain and literal injunctions of the sacred writings he ever yielded a ready obedience. It was on this ground that he would neither take an oath in court, nor fight in defence of himself or his country. He would speak the truth, but his yea must be yea,

and his nay—nay. He would give no cause of just offence to another, but if he received wrong he would endure it, not “resisting the evil,” but suffering wrongfully.

Convinced that the gospel is not a dispensation of shadows, but the very substance of the heavenly things themselves, the early Quakers held peculiar views on the character and perpetuity of what are called the Christian sacraments.—They maintained that in its essence the true baptism of Christ is a baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire. It is the washing of regeneration that is accompanied by a renewal of the Holy Ghost. The true communion of saints, is in the spiritual intercourse of believers with the Saviour and one with another in Him, whereby their souls are made partakers of that spiritual bread which nourisheth unto everlasting life. They contended that there is no connexion as of necessity between the visible sign and the thing signified. Let it be granted that these rites were practised in an early age of the church, so also were the washing of the disciples’ feet, salutation, circumcision, and other Jewish ceremonies. From this we are not to infer their institution as perpetual ordinances in the church.\*

In those times doubtless they had a service, they

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\*The following is an extract from a paper entitled “Gospel truths,” published in Dublin, in 1698, and signed

WILLIAM PENN,  
ANTHONY SHARP,

THOMAS STOREY,  
GEORGE ROOK.

“We believe the necessity of the one baptism of Christ, as well as of his one supper, which he promiseth to eat with those that open the door of their hearts to Him, being the baptism and supper signified by the outward signs; which, though we disuse, we judge not those that conscientiously practise them.”



have since, however, been applied to superstitious uses, and by their substitution for the realities of which they were professedly but the symbols, an incalculable injury has been inflicted on spiritual religion.

In the great missionary movement of 1654, the ministers who left the northern counties spread themselves into all parts of the nation, and wherever they went the burden of their concern was to bring men to the knowledge of spiritual truth. Essentially their mission was a crusade against all that was ceremonial, and in their view, non-essential in religion.

For the duties on which they were entering the avocations of their past life may seem to have been in some sense but an indifferent preparation. They were, however, a body of men deeply impressed with the importance of their work, they believed intensely the truths which they communicated, and in the earnestness of such a conviction there is a power over the hearts of others which far transcends all studied eloquence.

Fearless in manner, and unpolished in address, their speech was simple and without circumlocution. They were experimental preachers, loyal to their convictions of truth, and disposed to make no terms with error. "They waxed strong and bold through their faithfulness; thousands in a short time being turned to the truth, through their ministry, insomuch that in most counties and many of the considerable towns of England, meetings were settled, and there were daily added to them such as should be saved\*."

And, so the process went on; but their activity and

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\*Penn.



earnestness no less than their success speedily brought them into notice, and raised opposition from all quarters. Personally, Cromwell was averse to persecutions for religion, but in his ecclesiastical administration he was much controlled by others. During the Commonwealth therefore they suffered severely. To them the new presbyter was but "old priest writ large."\*

Numbers of them were imprisoned. Of the rest, they were abused in the streets, attacked through the press, and every where spoken against. These violent conflicts increased on the accession of Charles II. In this reign their sufferings almost exceeded the ordinary limits of human endurance. They were crowded by thousands into the prisons of the country, and vast numbers perished in these filthy and noisome dungeons, from cruelty and jail fever. But their success was accelerated by the means taken to arrest it. In all parts of the country additions continued to be made to the Society; and its experience abundantly proves, if proof were needed, how much may be effected, under the most adverse circumstances, by active, unselfish, and faithful men, who are prepared to suffer and to labour for a cause in which they have confidence.

Not only did the new society, during this period, take firm root in the rural districts and more populous commercial cities of Great Britain and Ireland, in the highest sense it became missionary in its character, for its ministers carried the message abroad into other countries, comprising the British colonies on the American continent and in the West Indies. They visited

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\*Milton.

also extensive districts in Western Europe, and the strongholds of Popery and Mahommedanism in the regions bordering on the Mediterranean Sea.

Let us pause at this point, and endeavour to ascertain the true character of the movement to which I have adverted. During the first twenty years of its existence Quakerism had made a great impression upon the country, but we have no adequate means by which to measure its permanence, or accurately to estimate its extent.

The movement was characterized by activity, by enthusiasm, and even by no small amount of what would be now called fanaticism. In the advocacy of their views the early preachers gave great prominence to one important but hitherto neglected phase of religious truth.

Every separate truth, however, has a determinate relation to other cognate truths, and that advocacy which on the whole does not present these truths in the harmony of this relation, is liable to run into extremes, and so to sacrifice one of the most important elements of permanent success. To some extent, doubtless, in its first life, the society failed to realise the importance of this consideration, and its subsequent teachings were unfavourably affected by the circumstance.

Cradled amid conflicts of no common intensity, there was an earnestness and an excitement connected with its first movements, which in the nature of things it would be impossible to sustain as its permanent condition. It grew up in an age of violent controversies, and these were conducted on both sides with what appears at this day an extraordinary amount of personal bitterness.

Men of warm temperaments and argumentative habits rushed into the arena; but a considerable proportion of both what they spoke and what they wrote was the issue of zeal often not adequately tempered by discretion, and in some instances, no doubt, of ignorance aggravated by haste.

The controversies of this era and the literature with which they are associated have now for the most part sunk into oblivion, but at the time they had a considerable influence in increasing the numbers without adding to the strength of the Society, for proselytes gained in the excitement of polemic discussions are not much to be depended upon; too often, as the controversy becomes exhausted, and the excitement dies out, they pass away with the influences that produced them.

It is not to be denied therefore that in the body at this time there was considerable mixture. Many enthusiasts passed under its name, in whom true Quakerism had taken no root. In process of time these went out from it, for they were not of it. The good seed had been profusely sown, but the crop, though luxuriant, was not so free from weeds, as if it had been produced under a somewhat more careful and systematic culture.

But, on the other hand, if the proceedings of Fox and his friends had been more regular and canonical, the effect in the aggregate would certainly have been less striking, and probably also far less beneficial.

They had an important mission to their generation. For this they were prepared by a series of unusual providences, and we are not to forget in this case that the great purposes of God in the moral regeneration of the



world, are often carried into effect by means which the wisdom of man may regard as inadequate, and by instrumentalities, which in our view are encompassed by imperfection.

But after making large deductions for that which was extraneous to true Quakerism in some of these early proceedings, it cannot be denied that a great amount of genuine work remains behind. No ordinary manifestation of ephemeral enthusiasm could have effected this. There must have been hidden somewhere real power in the ministers, and vitality in the truths which they communicated. "For when a creed is successfully introduced, which checks passion, subdues pride, and restrains self-will, we may be sure that there is a principle of truth that gives it power."\*

Its effects were not confined to women or to ignorant men of an excitable temperament and weak capacity. The influence swept over all classes, and wherever the message was received the life was changed. Atheists, drunkards, and excisemen, jailors, constables, and justices of the peace, sheriffs of counties and military officers, clergymen and ladies of rank, lords-in-waiting and university students, in short all conditions were represented in this despised and fanatical community.

Hitherto we have contemplated Quakerism rather as an influence than as an organization. The professors of the proscribed faith were to be found in all parts of the country, but it was not until the Society had attained its maximum as regards numbers, that it assumed a definite form, by the adoption of settled

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\* Colquhoun.



principles of government and a disciplinary administration.

From its origin, general meetings for districts, without specified limits, were occasionally convened to enquire into cases of persecution, suffering, or distress, with a view to collecting funds, and devising other means for their relief.

The arrangements connected with the public and orderly solemnization of marriages, and the accurate registration of births and deaths, appear also to have early received attention; but in these matters, to a large extent, each particular meeting discharged its own duties without control or supervision.

In the first twenty years of its existence, the members of the Society assembled for public worship for the most part in private dwelling-houses, for they attached no idea of holiness to any ecclesiastical edifices, nor did they find any reason in principle, or in the practice of the primitive believers, why they should be set apart from secular uses.

Of some of these scattered congregations we have no information whatever; of others we find notices in the records of the earliest meetings, in the journals of ministers, and in the accounts of sufferings under the conventicle act and other persecuting statutes.

Before the introduction of the discipline of the Society, many of these small companies which had assembled at irregular intervals, and in districts remote from other meetings, were probably to a large extent lost sight of, so that there can be no doubt that a considerable number of persons who had been affected by the teachings of the first ministers of the society, never became

absorbed into its ultimate organization.\* All those who frequented its meetings were considered as belonging to the body, and though without any prescribed system of discipline or church authority, they were subject one to another in love.

Persecution kept hypocrites out of their assemblies, and for the rest, their faith was preserved in lively exercise, and for the most part gave them victory over the world. But they had their treasure in earthen vessels, and from one time to another occasions arose when it became necessary, in consideration for the honor of God, and the service of His Truth, to withdraw themselves from those who walked disorderly, and to discharge other functions involving concert and arrangement.

The form of church government to be adopted by the new society was determined by principles fundamental to its doctrinal belief.

They were a small and scattered band of men and women, living in the world, but not of it. In so far as they were members of Christ, they were the organs of his Spirit, and their union was in Him, their living and ever present Head.

But out of this relationship there flowed duties from the associated persons towards each other; for those who are truly members of Christ no longer live unto

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\* On the importance of regular ecclesiastical supervision, John Wesley makes the following important and suggestive remarks:—

“From the terrible instances I met with in all parts of England, I am more and more convinced that the devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half awakened and then left to themselves to fall asleep again. Therefore, I determined, by the grace of God, not to strike one stroke in any place where I cannot follow the blow.”

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circumstance there arose a controversy which continued for several years, and resulted in a considerable though temporary secession from the ranks of the society. In this controversy William Penn, Robert Barclay, and Thomas Ellwood, all men of education and ability, now rising into influence and distinction, rendered valuable services by their writings in defence of order. Westmoreland was in the first instance the principal focus of this secession, but it subsequently spread into the West of England, where the separatists gained several adherents. A few years later the Society was involved in another controversy, of which George Keith was the leader, arising in the first instance out of some questions of a personal character, but eventually widening into discussions on doctrinal opinions. He gained several partizans in Pennsylvania, and a few in this country: but being disowned by Friends in America, he appealed to the Yearly Meeting in London, where the decision was confirmed. He shortly after became a minister of the established church, and the further progress of the secession was stayed.

Ultimately, however, a large proportion of the persons connected with both secessions were re-absorbed into the body; but the immediate effect of these controversies and of the secessions with which they were connected was to introduce greater regularity into the proceedings of the Society, by bringing under control its disturbing elements. On the other hand this action produced to some extent a diminution in the amount of its individual and spontaneous service, and of its aggressive missionary activity. In other respects, too, about this

time the society came within the influence of new conditions.

Persecution virtually had ceased, for on the accession of James II. the penal statutes were not rigidly enforced, and under cover of his dispensing power, he emptied the prisons of their suffering inmates, and granted religious toleration to his dissenting subjects. This toleration was confirmed by an act passed in the reign of William and Mary, which brought them effectual and permanent relief.

As the first generation of Friends passed from the stage, several persons, eminent for learning and ability, who had embraced the views of the Society, had begun to defend them in methodical works, which were extensively read, and which had a favourable influence alike on the action of the government and on the intelligence of the country.

The Society henceforth became more regular, though probably less active in its operations, even before the death of its venerable founder.

About this period (1690) died Robert Barclay, of Ury, at the age of forty-two. He is well known as a logical writer, a devoted minister of the gospel of Christ, and a humble and excellent man. The publication of his celebrated "Apology for the true Christian divinity" exercised within the Society an important influence on the method of expounding religious truths. It was the first systematic exposition of the doctrinal views of Friends, and it speedily acquired all the authority of a creed. As to the true character of the influence subsequently exerted by this work, different opinions will be held. It was not by theological dis-



quisitions that the early Quakers were brought to the knowledge of the truth, and even as regards Barclay himself, these had a very subordinate influence in drawing him into connection with the body. It was by his experience of the work, and witness of the Spirit, or to use his own expressions, through "being secretly reached by the principle of light and life," rather than by the conviction of his understanding, that he was first brought to Christ; and in the few years of his subsequent life this was the great theme of his teaching. In *very* life Barclay had devoted his vigorous intellect to the illustration of the doctrines of spiritual Christianity, and it was in these that he found his support in death. To one of his friends, who prayed by his bedside, he said—"Amen, Amen, for ever. How precious is the love of God among his children, and their love one to another. My love is with you, I leave it among you." His last words were—"Praised be the Lord: Let now thy servant depart in peace. Into Thy hands, O Father, I commit my soul, spirit, and body. Thy will, O Lord, be done in earth, as it is done in heaven."

In the same year, also, died George Fox, at the age of sixty-seven. This remarkable person had exercised to the last, with singular wisdom and modesty, a commanding influence in the society, and the loss of his clear discernment and mature judgment was in the then existing condition of the body a circumstance of considerable importance. George Fox had consecrated his life to the service of others, and he had received the reward of his abundant labours in large measures of cruelty and abuse. He was put in the stocks by parish constables, he was beaten and stoned by mobs. On

nine different occasions, amounting altogether to seven or eight years of his life, he was imprisoned in horrible dens, amid still more horrible companionships; but through all he was undaunted in his zeal for God, and gentle and tender towards his persecutors. His sufferings, however, broke his constitution, and abridged his life. But his temper had not been soured by opposition, nor his humility endangered by success. He lived through all a faithful and uncorrupted man, and after a short illness he died in the hope and assurance of the gospel. With a few characteristic and pregnant words, the good man closed his labours.

"The power of the Lord is over all weakness and death. The Lord reigneth: Blessed be the Lord." Three days afterwards he was interred in Bunhill-fields, and William Penn, the most distinguished of his surviving friends, wrote in his journal these few affectionate words—"Many sons have done wisely and virtuously, but thou, dear George, hast excelled them all." There are many men who have no true measures for such persons as George Fox, and to these he is simply a fanatic and an enthusiast. No doubt his character, like that of some other men, may be viewed under two aspects, but those who will take the pains to apply a careful and discriminating analysis to the investigation of his life and writings, will find, after making full allowance for what they may regard as "the illusions of a gloomy temperament," or "the errors of an untrained intellect"—that in George Fox there will still remain the elements of one of the noblest of human characters. Untrained in the learning of the schools, his judgment was free from the bias of other men's conclusions. Un-

skilled in the regular methods of gaining knowledge, by his own marvellous intuitions he drew a large amount of important truth out of obscurity. Many of the opinions for which he laboured and suffered so abundantly, though despised and disregarded at the time, have since obtained a stable popularity in the country, and others are yet destined to figure in the church of the future. In an age of intolerance he was the constant advocate of religious freedom, and the labours and sufferings of himself and his followers had a principal influence in bringing about a change in the religious legislation of the country.

His views on temperance, on judicial oaths, and truth speaking, on death punishments, and the reform of the criminal laws, on the discipline of prisons, on negro slavery, and some other subjects, in his own times were singular, and for the most part original, though now they have permeated the public mind, and influenced the legislation of the country.

In Colquhoun's "Short Sketches of some Notable Lives" we have a very interesting, and in the main a correct estimate of Fox's character.

"The truth is that Fox's character had, like that of many others, two sides; and the contrast between these is so great that one can hardly believe them to belong to the same man.

"On the one side, we have strange thoughts and words, fanciful imaginations—the illusions of an unlettered mind. But such things are not unusual. Dr. Johnson believed in second sight, in dreams and ghosts; and his case presents to us the credulity of a child, with the intellect of a giant. But if we turn to the other



side of Fox's character, we find this man of fancies and visions, confronted with controversialists, Jesuits, and lawyers—puzzling them with his subtlety, and with his logic beating down their fences. Now in a court of justice, he confronts the judge, defies the bar, picks flaws in their indictment, quotes against them adverse statutes, and wrings from baffled judges a reluctant acquittal. Then he is in the Protector's court, to meet a man hard to dupe. There he plants himself, his hat on his head, at Oliver's dressing-table; engages him in long discourse; sets before him his duty; presses on him the policy of toleration; till the iron-hearted soldier, first surprised, then attentive, at length interested, extends his hand to the Quaker, bids him repeat his visit, and tells him if they could meet oftener, they would be firmer friends. No less remarkable are his courage and skill. As storms thicken, he is always in front of the battle; wherever the strife is vehement, there he is; now in Lancashire, now in Leicester, in Westmoreland or Cornwall: meeting magistrates and judges, braving them at Quarter Sessions, vanquishing officers, governors of castles and judges. Then he sits down calmly to organize, with a forecast equal to that of Wesley, the scheme of Quaker polity, which has lasted to our times. And if we smile at the oddity of his language, at the curious missives which he hurls at mayors and magistrates, jailors and judges, we find at times a caustic style worthy of Hudibras or Cobbett, in which he lashes the frippery of the court, or meets the casuistry of the Jesuits or Ultra Calvinists; and as we dwell on those words of wisdom in which he tells us of his faith, and cheers the drooping heart of Cromwell's daughter,

we perceive that he is no common man, but one who with strange training and singular notions rose by the strength of genius and piety to a wide command over men."

To conclude—I have endeavoured to shew that George Fox and his associates during the second half of the 17th century had performed a great work ; and that the church which they had drawn together, had given undoubted evidence of true vitality. Their earlier proceedings no doubt had often been irregular, and many persons, passing under their name, had committed some acts, and used many expressions for which their chief justification is to be sought for in the license of the times in which they lived. And yet beneath all this irregularity and agitation, there was the spirit of a sound mind. They were true men after all, and God blessed their earnest and unselfish labours. The foundation of their success must be patent to all who have attentively pondered over their history.

They were consecrated to the promotion of a great work, and they believed intensely the truths that they communicated to others. They were active and aggressive. They travelled, and preached and wrote incessantly. During this half century alone, there issued from the press of the society upwards of three thousand separate books and papers, by more than six hundred different writers, all intended to establish their converts, or to explain or defend their opinions. No doubt a large proportion of this literary material had no permanent value, but the very amount of it proves that there was life at the source from which it issued.

It was a characteristic of these men, that they were changed themselves before they went about to change

others. They preached the gospel without charge, for their reward was in the souls that they gathered; hence their earnest words went to the hearts and consciences of their hearers. They paid little, perhaps too little, attention to creeds and schemes of doctrine.

The burden of their ministry, as I have already shown, was to draw men from the shadow to the substance; from dependence on the sign, to the experience of the things signified. Hence they spake much about the work of the Spirit in the conversion and regeneration of sinners, and about the necessity of being redeemed from the *power* of sin, as well as from its *guilt*.

In all their assemblies there was the liberty of prophesying; for they revived an ancient custom of the primitive church,\* by which all who believed themselves to be moved by a divine influence were allowed to speak in the congregation, those who were present judging how much authority was due to their ministrations. Thus the ministry was kept in healthy exercise.

In support of their principles they not only laboured, but they suffered also. Out of the thousands who were imprisoned during the Commonwealth, and the reign of Charles II. many hundreds fell a sacrifice to their sufferings, and a large portion of the society retained their religion at the cost of all the property that they possessed. But they passed through the ordeal with constancy, for they endured as "seeing Him who is invisible." The people looked on with wonder, for the "behaviour of the Quakers, said they, was very extraordinary, and had something in it that looked like the spirit of

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\* Mosheim.



martyrdom." While men of other sects, in the presence of these legal severities, were stricken with fear, retreating for divine worship into hidden and remote localities, they met at the same place and hour as in times of liberty, and when the officers came to seize them none would stir, they went altogether to prison and stayed there till they were dismissed. On their being discharged they went to their meeting-house as before, and when the doors were shut up by order,\* "they assembled in the street," for they were not afraid or ashamed to meet together in a peaceable manner to worship God, but in imitation of the prophet Daniel they would do it more publicly, because they were forbidden." Well might the biographer of Baxter exclaim, with reference to such acts—"The heroic and persevering conduct of the Quakers in withstanding the interference of government with the rights of conscience, by which they finally secured those peculiar privileges they so richly deserve to enjoy, entitles them to the veneration of all the friends of civil and religious freedom."

In the gathering together of this society, and in the moulding of its early character, something is to be attributed to the peculiarities of the times in which it originated, but essentially similar conduct will lead to similar results under all circumstances, and in all times. Do we desire to witness these results in our day? Let us ponder well the process through which they were attained by our fathers.

\* It was directed in 1670, by order in Council, "that Christopher Wren, architect, do take down the Meeting House in Horsleydown." Friends met on the rubbish, whence many were taken and imprisoned. This state of things continued for many months. Ratcliff Meeting House, and many others were treated after a similar fashion.

### LECTURE THIRD.

#### THE MIDDLE AGES OF QUAKERISM.

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"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be?"

"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

*St. Paul to the Romans.*

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IN tracing the History of the Society of Friends from its origin to the present time, the phenomena that have characterised it may be conveniently grouped into three eras, of about 70 years each. By thus adapting our arrangement to succeeding generations, and to the duration of the life of man, we shall approximate, to some extent at least, to an important chronological unit, applicable to all social and historical enquiries: "For there is," to use the language of an accurate writer,\* "a progressive change, both in the character of the human race and in their outward circumstances, so far as moulded by themselves; in each successive age the principal phenomena of society are different from what they were in the age immediately preceding, and still more different from any earlier time. The periods at which these successive changes are most apparent are intervals of one generation, during which a new set of human beings have been educated, have grown up from childhood, and taken possession of society."

In a preceding Lecture (The Early Friends and the Commonwealth Times,) I treated of the first period.

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\* John S. Mill.

In that Lecture it was my object to describe the origin of Quakerism, and to trace its connexions, direct or remote, with the principal causes which up to that time had moulded its character, or influenced its development. The religious and political circumstances of the Commonwealth time were extraordinary. Viewed through the dim light of two centuries of past years it appears to us now, as one of those grand historical epochs, in which "great plenitudes of the divine presence have been experienced, raising high tides in the human spirit and causing eminent virtues and talents to appear." \* The occasion called for remarkable men, and they came forth at its bidding.

The materials required for the illustration of this, the first period of our history, are abundant. The period on which we are now to enter, in whatever aspect we look upon it, is of a widely different character, and the published sources of our information regarding it become less and less copious as we approach to our own times. A connected history of the Society of Friends has never yet been written. The works in which this has been attempted are well known. They contain much matter of an interesting character under a somewhat crude and imperfect arrangement: with this some future historian will deal.

Early in the last century, the Yearly Meeting began to collect materials for such a work. In 1720, Sewell published his history in two volumes: it comprises an outline of the principal events from the origin of the Society to the year 1716. Gough's

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\* Emerson.



History, continuing the account to about 1760, was printed in four volumes in 1790. A similar historical record, relating to Friends in Ireland, was compiled by Dr. Ruddy: it comprises about the same period as the History of Gough. Of the last century no distinct record has been published.

These historical fragments manifest a fair amount of discretion and ability in their respective writers, but they are singularly deficient in the depth and variety of the knowledge they communicate, regarding the then existing condition of the great body of the Society. They are familiar with the official documents of the period, and with the action of our central meetings, with all extreme cases of suffering and with the applications made to parliament and persons in authority for relief from them. In addition to these they supply us with the biographies of a few of our most devoted and eminent men. They fail however to give us much real insight into the home life and conduct, the social, moral, and religious circumstances of our members in more obscure districts; concerning whom information might have been drawn from the records of our subordinate meetings.

If, moreover, we would truly understand the condition of the society during a given epoch, we must keep prominently in view the condition of those by whom they were surrounded, and this our historians have failed to do. Before proceeding, therefore, with the main subject of my Lecture, I propose briefly to glance at the moral and religious condition of the country at large. For every age has moral and religious as well as social and political characteristics peculiar to itself, and

the human mind—not only more especially in passing from infancy to manhood, but also through the maturity of its powers to its decline in old age, is acted upon by the influences of its own times. For these characteristics of particular epochs are but the exponents of secret moral forces, which act powerfully though they act silently, moulding the character of the age by operating on individual conduct and opinion.

It is the function of religion, when vital, to control these influences; from the extent to which it effects this we may pretty accurately measure the energy of the religious life; the victory that overcometh the world is still only to be found in the vitality of the Christian's faith.

I adverted in a preceding Lecture to the moral character of the nation under the government of Charles I. but what was the state of things during the commonwealth when the Puritans were in authority? Vice was repressed by laws remarkable for their severity. All popular recreations were prohibited. "Religion was the language and garb of the court;" prayer and fasting were fashionable exercises, profession was the road to preferment, not a play was acted in all England for many years, and from the prince to the peasant and common soldier the features of Puritanism were universally exhibited. It has been well remarked "that if we judge of the condition of things from the wildness and extravagance of various opinions and practices which then obtained and from the hypocritical grimace which was adopted by many merely to answer a purpose, our opinion will necessarily be unfavourable. The truth perhaps lies between the extremes of un-

qualified censure and of undistinguishing approbation. Making all due allowance for the infirmity and sin which were combined with the profession of religion, making every abatement for the inducements which then encouraged the use of a religious vocabulary, admitting that there was even a large portion of pure fanaticism, still we apprehend an immense amount of genuine religion will remain. There must have been a large quantity of sterling coin when there was such a circulation of counterfeit."

Though the practice of open profligacy during the Commonwealth was thus discountenanced and repressed, yet there can be no doubt that there was a moral condition hidden beneath the surface of things which was far from satisfactory. Reaction followed when the Restoration came, and the flood-gates of vice and licentiousness were thrown open. The king was a confirmed voluptuary, drunkenness overspread the nation, the conversation of the people became fearfully corrupted, for coarse and ribald jests were laughed at by the highest classes, and were admitted into the popular literature of the day. With slight modifications, this continued to be substantially the moral condition of the country on the accession of the House of Hanover. "For the taint which Charles II. and his licentious court had inflicted upon the nation still festered, especially among the aristocracy. The plays, the novels, and the secret memoirs of the eighteenth century, exhibit such scenes of depravity as, after making ample allowance for exaggeration, fully equal those of the preceding age."\* Gambling was commonly practised by

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\* Pictorial History of England.



both sexes. It was during this period that Beau Nash maintained himself at Bath, in all but regal splendour, by a long course of success at play. Ladies of fashion ridiculed religion, but believed in ghosts; nor was the condition of the middle classes much more satisfactory. In the larger towns and cities, the merchant forsook his warehouse, and the tradesman his shop, resorting to taverns to take care of the State and the Protestant succession, to discuss the balance of power in Europe and the misconduct of the ministry, without thinking of their own. The approaches to the club houses in London are said to have been often surrounded by an ambushment of bailiffs and bailiff's followers, on the look out for these disinterested but needy patriots; so that an oratorial financier, when he had settled the debts of the nation in the club, was not unfrequently "sent off to the sponging house for being unable to settle his own."

The spirit of speculation infused itself into commerce, men rushed into bubble schemes promising a rapid accumulation of wealth, attempting to achieve riches by successful operations in the South Sea and other stocks, rather than by the slow but safe pursuits of honest industry.

The lower classes, influenced by the example of their superiors, revelled in the practice of a low sensuality.

Bull-baiting was a popular amusement, and it was not till now that boxing was elevated into a national institution, involving scientific training and high patronage.

Life and property were insecure, and not adequately protected: even around the metropolis the roads were

infested by mounted highwaymen who plundered travellers in defiance of the law,

Crime abounded though cart loads of criminals were executed. The great national sin of intemperance was never so rife as at this time.

On the average of the whole population the consumption per head of malt liquor is believed to have been nearly double the amount consumed at present, and it is not till about the close of the reign of George I. that we hear much of the excessive spirit drinking of the population of our larger towns. Grand juries denounced it as one of the main causes of the poverty and wretchedness of the lower classes, and, about 1736, the subject forced itself on the attention of parliament during several succeeding sessions.

But notwithstanding this deterioration of its morals, the nation made progress in wealth and intelligence.

From the Restoration of Charles II. to the abdication of James, the commercial marine of England more than doubled itself. In every department of science and literature there were many distinguished cultivators. The Royal Society was established, Newton wrote his *Principia*, and Halley and Flamstead devoted themselves to practical astronomy. Milton, Dryden, and Pope published immortal poems; Locke, Berkley, and Bolingbroke cultivated metaphysics.

The reputation of the drama was sustained by many brilliant though immoral writers; and polite literature, under Swift, Addison, Steele, and other essayists, rose into an importance and exercised an influence that has probably not been since equalled, and certainly never exceeded.

"But the world by wisdom knew not God." At the Restoration, crowds of the most pious and learned of the clergy had been driven out of the church, and the establishment became an engine of state policy, which the sovereign used for the suppression of true religious feeling, with a view to preparing the nation for the restoration of Popery. The example of the court reacted on the clergy who succeeded. Many of them were ignorant, indifferent, and immoral. When Wesley commenced his itinerant labours, about 1740, he found them "boozing in taverns." "Little service," says Colquhoun, "could be expected from such men, and little was got. Those who escaped scandal did not rise to usefulness. With the exception of a few clergymen drawn to towns, or niched in family livings, the mass of the rural clergy in the days of Anne, George I. and George II., grovelled in habits of a coarse sensuality. They were content to sail with the stream—and a dirty stream it was down which English society was floating. Little sense of religion was there, and as little of morality."

Bishop Burnett, writing in 1713, when in the 70th year of his age, deplores this condition in deeply pathetic terms. "He could not live long, and he must give a free vent to thoughts that lay in his mind both night and day, and were the subjects of his secret mournings. He could not look without the deepest concern to the imminent ruin hanging over his church. The outward state of things was black enough (God knows,) but that which excited his fears was the inward condition into which the church had unhappily fallen. None but those who were obliged to know it could adequately comprehend



the religious ignorance of those who presented themselves for ordination. They were strangers to the plainest parts of the Scriptures, which they said, in excuse for their ignorance, their tutors in the Universities had never mentioned the reading of to them, so that they could give no account, or a very imperfect one, of the contents even of the Gospels. The case was little better with those who having got into orders came for institution. They could not make it appear that they had read the Scriptures or any good book since they were ordained, so that the small measure of knowledge they once had was in a way to be quite lost."

Archbishop Secker, writing several years later, confirms these views. "It was natural to men to complain of their own times, for in comparing one age with another we are apt to think the evils from which we suffer the greatest. But we cannot be mistaken that an open disregard for religion is the distinguishing characteristic of the present age. The evil has grown to a great height in the metropolis, and is daily spreading through every part of the nation. It has brought dissoluteness and contempt of principle into the higher part of the world, and profligate intemperance and fearless criminality into the lower. Christianity is ridiculed and railed at with very little reserve, and the teachers of it without any at all."

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the moral and religious condition of the Dissenters seems to have been about on a par with that of the Church. After the Restoration of Charles II. the Presbyterians, not being permitted to organize regular synods, were deprived of the benefits of ecclesiastical supervision.

The meetings of the Independents were broken up by the persecutions of that period, and both parties assembled in small companies and by stealth. The establishment of a general toleration, in 1688, found most of the old ministers of the Commonwealth removed from the stage, and with them much of the vitality of that period had died out.

Soon after the accession of the House of Hanover, the metaphysical divinity of Dr. Clarke, the low church views of Bishop Hoadley, and the arianism of Whiston, the mathematician, became popular among the Whig party then in the ascendant. They were embraced by a considerable section of the clergy, and many of those Presbyterian and Independent ministers who had but recently entered upon their duties adopted the fashionable opinions, so that, in the time of George II. "these denominations could number the Socinian pastors of their flocks by scores."

Dr. Watts published his work on the revival of practical religion, in 1731. In that work he uses this language—"I am well satisfied that the great and general reason is the decay of vital religion in the hearts and lives of men; and the little success which the ministrations of the Gospel have had of late for the conversion of sinners to holiness, and the recovery of them from the state of corrupt nature and the course of this world to the life of God by Jesus Christ. Nor is the complaint of the declension of virtue and piety made only by the Protestant dissenters. It is a general matter of mournful observation amongst all that lay the cause of God to heart, and, therefore, it cannot be thought amiss for every one to use all just and

proper efforts for the recovery of dying religion in the world."

Let us now proceed to enquire how Quakerism fared during the ungenial era over which we have just passed. Was it favourably circumstanced for resisting the evils that everywhere surrounded it? To what extent did its members fall under the power of the temptations of that immoral age? How far did its religious action tend to control or modify them? We will endeavour to throw some light on these enquiries in the sequel.

At the commencement of the 18th century the society was numerous and widely distributed. In England and Ireland the numbers attending its religious meetings were probably about three times as great as at the present time. In Scotland, Wales, and the Isle of Man, where Friends are now all but extinct, considerable colonies existed. On the continent of Europe Yearly meetings were held in Holland, and at Dantzic. They comprised Friends from Amsterdam, Empden, Frederick Stadt, and elsewhere. From 1680 to 1702 meetings were held in North Africa amongst Friends in captivity; at Algiers and Sallee where several conversions are reported to have taken place. In the United States of America Friends were, then as they still are, numerous; and in the West Indies, which they have long since ceased to occupy, there were regular meetings in the Islands of Jamaica, Antigua, Barbadoes, Bermudas, Nevis, and probably in some others. Surely we may accept this as evidence of the religious energy of the Society during the first era of its existence.

There is reason to believe that at the commencement of the 18th century, there were about 40,000 persons



so far connected with the Society of Friends in England and Wales, as to be included in its registrations. These may for the purposes of this Lecture be conveniently grouped into three classes, viz., 1st.—Those born after the accession of James II., and the cessation of persecution. These would mostly be connected with the society by birth, and might comprise in round numbers about 10,000 individuals. 2nd.—Those born during the Commonwealth and the reign of Charles II. Of these there might be about 20,000, a considerable proportion of whom would have no birth connection with the society. 3rd.—The remaining 10,000 now of mature age, born prior to the Commonwealth times, would be connected with the body by conviction only.

In all these classes there were doubtless many true Quakers. In the two last by far the largest proportion were probably such; but on the other hand there must have been, and the evidence is abundant which proves that there actually were, many young persons especially, who had not been availingly brought under true Christian conviction. It may safely be taken for granted, therefore, that even before the commencement of the 18th century the Society had become subject to new conditions. Originally if they would hold and propagate their religious principles they must submit to heavy sacrifices. Persecution aided them, however, in keeping hypocrites and superficial professors out of their ranks; for none but earnest men will openly propagate a creed that leads to the spoiling of their goods, or to death from long imprisonments. But before the close of the 17th century the penal statutes had been

abolished; and with them had vanished the "qui-tam writs," and other engines of legal cruelty, through the agency of which bad men had enriched themselves by plundering the most virtuous and deserving of their neighbours.

But with them too had passed away some influences which had braced the early Friends to that heroic exhibition of energy in action, and of patience in suffering, which have been the admiration of subsequent ages. Surely that discipline was not in its results insalutary, though painful in the experience, whereby the early Friends were so taught so endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. These helps to refinement and energy of character, their successors of the second generation did not possess. The great battle with persecution and suffering had been to a large extent fought out before their day; and a period of rest had supervened, during which much of the effort thus liberated became absorbed by the endeavour to acquire wealth in the pursuits of settled industry. There is no doubt a difference of circumstances to be taken into account between a church in its first fresh life, and a church in its mature and organised development. In ordinary phraseology we speak of the descendants of pious ancestors, as being rather born Christians than made such; but the early Friends recognised in this position a fallacy which they could not accept.

The essential nature of Christianity cannot be altered by external accidents and circumstances; the baptism which in their view doth now save is the answer on the part of each individual member, "of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

That the attention of George Fox had been early directed to the true constitution of a Christian church we learn from an extract from his Journal quoted in my last lecture.\*

The principles set forth at this early period seem to have subsequently regulated all his ecclesiastical arrangements, so far as he lived to perfect them. In determining upon the organisation of his followers, their union was to be with Christ and their fellowship one with another through Him. The process was that described by the Apostle. "They first gave their own selves to the Lord, and then unto us, by the will of God."

Robert Barclay is still more specific as to the views of the early Friends on this subject. To some extent, however, before the close of the 17th century the Society had become less homogeneous. It contained within itself a considerable mixture of incongruous elements. No arrangement was adopted for winnowing the chaff out of the wheat. This function had been formerly to some extent discharged by persecution; but now, all who attended its meetings, and all the offspring of such who were in the like practice, were considered as belonging to the body, until by some overt act of immorality they proved themselves unworthy of their hereditary privilege.

Such an arrangement if continued for a series of years must materially affect the character of any church, by corrupting the source from which its vitality is to be sustained and perpetuated. The tendency will be in

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\* See Lecture II.—page 45.



the progress of time for a society so constituted to lose its essentially Christian character, and to become again simply a portion of the general community subsisting under peculiar regulations and circumstances.

How did Friends at the commencement of the 18th century deal with the change which was silently gathering round the Society? Was their diagnosis of its condition accurate? Was their treatment of that condition characterised by wisdom, and did it result in success? On the contrary it is to be feared, they were but partially alive to the critical and difficult circumstances into which they were drifting. Most of the early ministers who had been instrumental in gathering the Society, had long since gone to their rest. A few of them, however, still remained. William Penn was one of these. He had passed through the ordeal of many trials; but the strength of his capacious intellect was yet unimpaired. At this time, however, he was much occupied by his American concerns; and in other respects as the leading advocate of a comprehensive religious toleration, he would look charitably on the yet incipient manifestations of the growing evil.

George Whitehead was then in the 64th year of his age; but his eye had not become dim, nor his natural force materially abated. His life was still devoted to the service of Him for whom he had laboured so long and suffered so deeply. In later life, however, he travelled less abroad on religious service, spending much of his time in the city of London; where, for nearly another quarter of a century, he laboured against the inroad of evils, which it was not in his power to eradicate. In these efforts he was ably seconded by

Thomas Ellwood, Richard Claridge, William Edmondson, Thomas Camm, Joseph Wyeth, Thomas Storey, Gilbert Latey, Samuel Bownas, and others; but many of these died too early in the century to have much influence over the course of the Society's proceedings.

Such was the position of the body at the commencement of the 18th century. Two courses were open for adoption, in continuing the mission of their predecessors. Recognising all men as sinners, to labour primarily to bring all men to Christ. In so far, only as they were instrumental in bringing them unto living union with Him would true members be added to His church, for it ought ever to be remembered that the real strength of a church depends less on the *number* of its members than upon their *earnestness* and *zeal*. But superadded to this, the original object of the Society's mission, they now began and began rightly, to devote a considerable amount of their interest to the descendents of the first converts, in the hope that by subjecting them to good training and watchful oversight, they might be prepared to fill in the church, the vacant places of those who had passed away from the scene of their activities. To a certain extent for some time, the attempt was made to carry out both objects; by degrees, however, Friends became less missionary and aggressive, devoting a larger amount of their attention to the offspring of their own members. There is much reason to believe that the greatest source of difficulty experienced by the body at this period arose from its mixed constitution; from its failing to keep prominently before it, that line which should divide, with various degrees of distinctness, the members of a true church from those who are of the

world. Under the best arrangements, no doubt, there is great difficulty in drawing this line, for human judgments are ever liable to serious errors. The difficulty of drawing the line is admitted, but might it not have been better to draw it somewhat incorrectly than not to attempt to draw it at all?

It must be admitted, however, that this question has many bearings, and that its solution is by no means free from practical difficulties which require to be dispassionately considered in dealing with it.\*

During the second era of its existence, it is a truth patent to all who are accurately acquainted with its history, that from whatever cause this condition might arise, the Society of Friends did not reproduce the active spirituality which characterised its origin. This no doubt may be to some extent accounted for on general considerations. It is in the nature of

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\* The early experience of Wesley among a body of untrained converts who joined his society is interesting and curious as bearing practically on this question. In endeavouring to carry out the opposite theory to that accepted by Friends, without reference to the educational element, he encountered great difficulties and displacements. In the course of three months he informs us that 76 persons withdrew from one of his societies in the north of England. He classified and stated their reasons:—The refusal of the clergymen to give them the sacrament; the opposition of husbands, wives, or masters; the persuasion of friends; the ridicule and abuse of enemies; the loss of the poor's allowance; want of time: the fear of falling into fits; the objection to turn his back on his baptism; the retention of Thomas Naisbit in the society; such in substance were the grounds of their resignations. During the same period 84 were expelled, viz:—Two for cursing and swearing; two for habitual Sabbath breaking; seventeen for drunkenness; two for retailing spirituous liquors; three for quarrelling and brawling; one for beating his wife; three for habitual wilful lying; four for railing and evil speaking; one for idleness and laziness; twenty-nine for lightness and carelessness. The tares must have been growing somewhat profusely among the wheat in this community to admit of such a crop being weeded out.—*Southey's Life of Wesley*, vol. 1 p. 303.



religious revivals to fluctuate. The excitement of their first life, and the fervour of their first love are not the abiding condition of converts, and they certainly cannot communicate them to their successors.

The mantle even of the primitive Christians did not fall upon those who came after them. This was the case at the Reformation; and remarkably so in the experience of the older Puritans. More recently it has been verified in other revivals. Nearly half a century after the commencement of his great mission John Wesley writes: "Truly when I saw what God had done among His people 40 or 50 years ago, when I saw them warm in their first love, magnifying the Lord and rejoicing in Christ their Saviour, I could expect nothing less than that all these would have lived like angels here below; that they would have walked as continually seeing Him who is invisible, having constant communion with the Father and the Son, living in eternity and walking in eternity.

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"But instead of this it brought forth error in ten thousand shapes. It brought forth enthusiasm, imaginary inspirations, ascribing to the all-wise God all the wild, absurd, self inconsistent, dreams of a heated imagination.

It brought forth pride, it brought forth prejudice, evil surmising, censoriousness, judging and condemning one another, all totally subversive of that brotherly love which is the very badge of the Christian profession; without which, whosoever liveth is accounted dead before God. It brought forth anger, hatred, malice, revenge, and every evil work; all direful fruits not of the Holy Spirit, but of the bottomless pit."

The good man gave strong, perhaps too strong, expression to his disappointment; for after all, to some extent at least, it originated in the ordinary reaction that follows the excitement of all great religious revivals. In these general considerations; in the low state of morals and religion in the country at large, acting upon the Society, weakened as I conceive by an important characteristic of its constitution—the increasing absence among its members of religious homogeneousness, we have, I think, the conditions combined which furnish strong *a priori* grounds for anticipating a state of things such as was in fact realised in the period we are now reviewing.

The moral and religious condition of the Society, at the commencement of the 18th century is well described in the following extract from one of its earlier historians. (Gough). “And now a second generation being risen and arising among the Society, who held the profession as the religion of their education, and not by the purchase of giving up all for its sake as their predecessors had done, too many of them appeared in danger of being carried away with the stream, and of being drawn aside by the tempting prospect into an inordinate pursuit of wealth, beyond the limits of a truly religious disposition and to the obstruction of their growth in religious experience. Yet the main body of the Society consisted of some of the old stock who still survived, and several of the present generation, who actuated by a serious concern for their well-being, sought it in the way of self-denial and the daily cross, as their elder brethren and fathers had done, and made the religion of their education that of their judgment and the rule of their conduct in life.

These, clearly perceiving the injurious consequences likely to arise by indulging this worldly disposition, and the danger of friends and their posterity resuming the spirit and customs of the world, were incited as faithful watchmen to give timely warning of the danger."

Among these was Ambrose Rigge, of Reigate, who died in 1704. Even before the close of the preceding century, for many days, months, and years, "his life had been oppressed and his spirit grieved by the uneven walking of many who have a name to live, and who profess the knowledge of God in words," of whom, he says, "many have got credit upon the account of truth, because at the beginning it did, and doth still, lead all who were and are faithful to it, to faithfulness and truth even in the unrighteous Mammon; and to let their yea be yea, and their nay be nay, even between man and man in outward things, so that many would have credited one who was called a Quaker with much, and many I believe did merely on that account, some whereof I doubt, have just cause to repent of it already.

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"It is so far below the nobility of Christianity, that it is short of common civility and honest society amongst men, to twist into other men's estates, and borrow upon the truth's credit (gained by the just and upright dealing of the faithful) more than they certainly know their estates can answer; and with what they borrow, reach after great things in the world, appearing to men to be what in the sight of God and truth they are not; seeking to compass great gain to themselves whereby to make themselves and children rich or great in the world. This I testify, for the Lord



God, is deceit and hypocrisy, and will be blasted with the breath of His mouth."

In 1710 the Yearly meeting deplores this growing tendency, and directs George Fox's "Epistle of caution to Traders," to be printed and read annually in Quarterly and Monthly meetings. This advice was repeated in 1724. In the interim the nation had become involved in the wildest commercial speculations. In 1720 the South sea Scheme commenced. Its stock rose during that year to ten times its original cost. "Other companies sprung up, and grew round the mighty original like mushrooms round a rotten tree," so that 'Change Alley, it is said, was crammed from morning to night by an eager crowd comprising persons of every station, colour, and description. Here the squire bought stock from the parson, and the duke from the dissenting minister. In the great rush into these bubble schemes many Friends were soon involved, so that the period (1720-1730) during which most of them collapsed, was characterised by failures of such criminality and disgrace as had been altogether unknown in our early history. It has been well remarked of this period, that "the undue pursuit of worldly gain may be considered as having stood in the relation of both cause and effect, to the low spiritual condition with which it became connected; and there were doubtless many things which conspired to lay the members of the Society open to such a snare." \*

During the early persecutions it had been difficult for the Friends to procure a livelihood; but with all their

peculiarities the first Quakers were honest true-hearted men, whose word was their bond. These qualities have an intimate connection with commercial success, and by the steady practice of them, they soon became distinguished as prudent and thriving tradesmen. Thus a foundation was laid for the accumulation of wealth, which by degrees began to exercise an unfavourable influence on the religious and moral condition of the body.

"It is amidst the tempests of persecution, and in the dark ages of trial that the church gathers strength. Beneath unclouded sunshine it languishes and faints." Great changes soon began to manifest themselves, especially among the rising generation. Several of them were now to be found in the practice of immoral indulgences. In general society, excess in drinking, great license, extravagance in dress, devotion to pleasure, were everywhere prevalent; and the records of this period abundantly prove that these had begun to make inroads, especially among some of the younger Friends. In the proceedings of one Monthly meeting in the north of England, as early as 1702, the young men are reported as misbehaving themselves at inns at the time of their Quarterly and General meetings. In two others it is stated, in 1704, that they are to be found on these occasions in the streets, but are absent from the meetings altogether, for which they are sharply reprov'd. In others there is the evidence of a very low moral condition. At Bristol, so early as in 1701, the Monthly meeting issued a minute of caution to Friends, "not to take it amiss if they find their children and servants in Bridewell" for offences committed during

the hours of Divine service. "Since the Government is strict in this case for the suppression of vice and looseness."\* There were other unsatisfactory indications at this period, to which I must briefly refer.

The infidel writings of Toland, Woolston, and others, were much circulated in the early part of the 18th century, and their publication led to some animated controversies. These deistical works found their way into many families of Friends. The Yearly meeting referred to the subject in the printed epistles of 1729 and 1730, cautioning Friends "to be very careful to prevent their children and servants from reading such vile and corrupt books, (some of which have been published of late,) as manifestly tend to oppose and reject the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and to introduce Deism, Atheism, and all manner of infidelity and corruption both in principle and practice." The subject engaged the attention of the inferior meetings, and in one of the largest of the Northern Quarterly Meetings, and probably elsewhere, the works of Woolston were specified by name, and directed to be collected and burnt. This state of things led to a rapid increase of disciplinary regulations.

It is questionable whether there was not at this time an over estimate of the power, and a want of clear perception of the functions of ecclesiastical discipline. There are fruits growing out of the corrupt nature of man, that however they may be modified in character by external treatment, can only be removed when the root which nourishes them has been destroyed. At this time,

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\* W. Tanner's Lectures.



for example, there was great extravagance in dress, and much expensive display in the wearing of mourning garments in memory of the dead. Attempts were made to keep these in check by the issuing of minute sumptuary regulations, but they failed to achieve their purpose.

Combined with this laxity in conduct and moral principle, we find the manifestation of greater impatience under restraint. This feeling not unfrequently was carried to the extent of open insubordination and resistance. Several cases occur, where committees appointed by superior meetings, were set at defiance by the inferior. In one case, at least, of a somewhat later date, such a committee is reported to have been waylaid and attacked. In 1760, Mary Jerom, who had been disowned by her Monthly meeting, brought an action for libel, at the Nottingham Assizes, against the Clerk for having read in usual course the minute of disownment issued in her case. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising, that the discipline of the Society was less successful in reclaiming delinquents than had formerly been the case. Even in its administration there existed considerable irregularity. At one time we find great laxity and indifference, at another there was a stringency of rule enforced by a promptitude of decision characteristic of impatience and haste. Many efforts were made to arrest the progress of these disorders, and soon by far the largest proportion of the Society's energy began to be absorbed in questions connected with the regulation of the outward conduct of its members. Much attention was paid to the promotion of education

in day schools taught by Friends, and to a certain extent no doubt these efforts were beneficial.

Before the close of the preceding century George Fox had pressed this subject upon the attention of his followers. "Some among you breed up your children in such a rude, heady way, that when they grow up they do not matter you nor care for you. In some things they are worse than the world's, more loose, stubborn and disobedient, so that when they come to be sent apprentice they run quite out into the world." This, after his death, became more abundantly manifest.

There is no doubt a great influence exerted for good or for evil in the early education of a child, and the patient labours and earnest prayers of Christian parents and teachers may, for this end, be ranked among the most powerful of human instrumentalities. Yet the truth remains whatever may be our theory: in numberless instances we cannot, by any human instrumentality however powerful, make our children into all that we should wish them to be. The corrupt instincts of our common nature will develop themselves notwithstanding all our attempts to repress and eradicate them.

In taking my leave of the moral and religious condition of the Society which I have delineated in the foregoing sketch, it may be proper to remark that the conclusions therein enunciated rest upon an amount and variety of evidence which could not in passing be indicated. I have now before me a list of 1401 Friends who were married during this period, 1700-50, in five Monthly meetings, whose Records I have carefully examined. Within the same districts, and during the same period, 644 persons (being 46½

for every 100 married) were separated from the society.

I have arranged and recorded the causes of their separation. It may be stated generally that about 41 per cent. of them were for marriages contrary to rule, 37 per cent. were for immoral conduct, and the remaining 22 per cent. were from various other causes. On comparing these results with the experience of the period comprised in the preceding Lecture, and presuming upon the uniform exercise of the discipline in the respective periods, it would appear that marriages contrary to rule had increased about three-fold during this period, and that the amount of immorality had nearly doubled itself.

I have thus endeavoured to convey to you an outline of the moral and religious *condition* of Friends, in connection with the state of things existing in the country at large. I will refer in a few concluding observations to the *action* of the Society during the period which I have undertaken to review.

It has been already remarked that the characteristics of a church in the first stage of its development are different from those exhibited in its normal and organized condition, hence it was to be anticipated that the religious action of the second generation of Friends would differ from the action of the first.

Originally addressing themselves to all, the object of the early Friends had been to quicken into the divine life men who had been dead in trespasses and sins, and thus to draw them together by the bonds of a common sympathy into the fellowship of the gospel of Christ. Their successors endeavoured to hold that which they



had drawn together, to consolidate the elements so vitalised, and to confer upon the mass a healthy corporate action. To effect this, much work required to be done. The granting of religious toleration, however, by William and Mary, furnished them with many new facilities for the attainment of these objects. Meeting houses were to be built, and schools provided with teachers. From 1690 to 1720 a large proportion of these buildings were erected. They had previously for the most part worshipped in dwelling houses. This higher type of corporate organisation gradually evolved, though at irregular intervals, many of our disciplinary arrangements. The answering of Queries, the appointment of Overseers and Elders, the reception of convinced persons into membership, and, more recently, the recognition of Ministers, the regulations for the more equal incidence of the cost of maintaining the poor involving the rules of settlement, the issuing of Certificates on the removal of members; these, and many other arrangements of our religious polity, were for the most part brought into more or less of methodical operation during the first half of the 18th century. In endeavouring to determine the exact period when these various usages were adopted we encounter great diversities of practice in different meetings and districts. The central action of the Society did not then reach the extremities so immediately as is now the case. Hence the recommendations of the Yearly meeting were followed out with much irregularity in many of the subordinate meetings.

Even in extensive districts Women's meetings for discipline were omitted for long periods, and, so late as 1760, only one Preparative meeting was regularly held

in the two counties of Sussex and Kent. Originally, General meetings for the spread of the truth were numerous and frequent. Subsequently they became occasions of much disorder, and, soon after the middle of the last century, these public meetings, except when held at the request of a minister, had to a large extent been discontinued.

During the second half of the 17th century no inconsiderable proportion of the Society's action was absorbed in the publication of books of a controversial or doctrinal character. It was doubtless to some extent in consequence of the granting of religious toleration to Dissenters, but perhaps still more of the decay of religious earnestness among all classes of Christian professors, that the controversies which had raged so fiercely during the civil wars and the Commonwealth, as well as in the reigns of the later Stuarts, had for the most part died out with the 17th century.

The works of Keith and Bugg (1690-1700), "The Country Parson's Plea," (1728), supposed to have been written by the Bishop of London, and other pamphlets of a local or limited interest, called out occasional replies from Friends, but they produced no results of permanent value or importance.

The constitutional changes which had then recently taken place in this country, had considerably modified the relation in which the Society stood to the civil government.

The early Friends had at all times recognised within conscientious restrictions the duty of obedience to the government under which it was their lot to live. Not the less on this account did individuals among them

feel bound to address those in authority in the language of warning and remonstrance, in which they conveyed to them some truths that rarely reached them through other channels.

Friends were not, however, at this time, party politicians, and they studiously kept themselves free from all political combinations of which the object was to change a dynasty or to subvert the constitution as by law established. Under both the Commonwealth and the Stuarts they had suffered severely, but they had suffered without resistance, committing their cause to Him who judgeth righteously. On the granting of religious toleration by William and Mary, and the subsequent adjustment of the penal laws to the rights of conscience, they became bound to the sovereigns of the Revolution and of the House of Hanover in the bonds of a much closer affection. Their loyalty was warmed by gratitude, and their speech became more courtly. On every available occasion, whether it was the accession of a new sovereign, the birth or death of a distinguished member of the Royal family, the repeal of an obnoxious statute, or the suppression of a formidable rebellion, they promptly presented themselves at the foot of the throne, with expressions of lively gratitude and sympathy, and assurances of their unchanging fidelity and affection. While the Whig party maintained the ascendancy in the government of the country Dissenters were conciliated, and the rights of conscience were increasingly recognised. Of this disposition in the administration Friends were not slow to avail themselves. At their instance, during this half century, the legal process for the recovery of tithes and other ecclesiastical demands was simplified and rendered



less vexatious and costly, and such a form of affirmation was substituted for an oath in evidence, as reconciled to a large extent the demands of justice with the religious scruples of the great body of friends.

To a greater or less extent in all religious bodies, but especially in the Society of Friends, there is an important sympathy between the religious vitality of the ministry, and that of the body out of which it arises, and with which it is associated ; the two act and re-act upon each other. It was through the instrumentality of an earnest and faithful ministry that the marked effects connected with the first gathering of Friends were produced, and on the other hand it was out of the true vitality of the body that the ministry was itself replenished and perpetuated. After making all needful allowance for the peculiarities and even the infirmities of some of these early preachers, we are not able to resist the conclusion that for more than sixty years the Society on the whole was blessed with an efficient and successful ministry. The ministers existed in adequate numbers, their distribution was such as to leave few places long without their service. They devoted themselves earnestly to the work, they did not overcharge themselves with wordly cares, and their simple labours were largely blessed to the conversion of sinners. Without any preconcerted arrangements in connexion with the ministry, there can be no doubt that, for a long time, the religious meetings in the society, were felt by those who attended them to be lively and edifying. With reference to these meetings, Robert Barclay gives us this testimony, as applicable to the period in which he lived. "And God is not wanting to move in his children, to

bring forth words of exhortation or prayer when it is needful, so that of the many gatherings and meetings of such as are convinced of the truth, there is scarcely any in which God raiseth not up some or other to minister to his brethren, and there are few meetings that are altogether silent. For where many are met together, in this one life and name, it doth most naturally and frequently excite them to pray to, and praise God, and stir up one another by mutual exhortations and instructions. Yet we judge it needful there be in the first place some time of silence \* \* \* and not to hurry into the exercise of these things so soon as the bell rings, as other Christians do."

The earlier records do not enable us to measure the extent to which this liberty of prophesying was practically carried ; but the evidence is clear that, both as regards the *amount*, the *activity* and the *distribution* of the ministry, through the goodness of God, there was a liberal provision in the church. A considerable number of these early ministers survived during some part of the second epoch. In the meantime, as I have already shown, a great decline in the religious life of the body had set in, which materially influenced its condition, and this re-acted upon the ministry. A smaller number of persons now dedicated themselves to the work than was formerly the case, and, even as regards these, there was less of active service beyond the limits of the society and less visible fruit resulted from their labours. The evidence of Dr. Watts has been already referred to, as proving that the same religious condition subsisted at this period among other bodies of Protestant dissenters.

Samuel Bownas was a man of great experience and

of a clear discernment. He had commenced his ministry during the last years of the preceding period (1697,) and in 1751 he writes the following letter, (which so far as I know, has never been published. It is addressed to an aged cotemporary minister:—"The Church seems very barren of young ministers to what it was in our youth, nor is there much convincement to what was then. It seems to me (and I have been a Minister these 54 years,) that I had more service and better success in my ministry the first 20 years, than I have since had for a long time. I do not find any fruit or good effect of what I do in that way, and yet what I am concerned in seems to be very acceptable and well received by others. I have closely examined where the fault is, but don't find it out. On my last journey into your parts, (the north of England,) it seemed to very little purpose. In Norfolk and Suffolk it appeared to me that I had very good and edifying service in many places, but that is all I find come of it. The man spoke well, say they, and that is all I get for my labour. Now, formerly, I rarely went a journey but I found some convincement. Taking this into consideration makes my heart sad, but we must submit, for unless our Master bless our ministry we cannot make it profitable to others.

As the number of ministers became smaller, and their activity less spontaneous, the society began to suffer from their unequal distribution. In some meetings there were several, in others, and that the larger proportion, none were resident for many years in succession. In the preceding century such a circumstance had rarely occurred, and, if it had, the itinerant activity of the ministry would have neutralised it. For there is abundant



evidence of a godly care existing among these early ministers, to distribute themselves according to the religious necessities of the several meetings. This was the case in London, Bristol and elsewhere. On other occasions directions were given to ministers, by Monthly meetings, to attend weak meetings, and especially those where no minister resided, inquiry being periodically made whether this service had been discharged. Other cases are on record where ministers are recommended to hold meetings in 'dark places,' or in districts where none had been held before. All these various methods were adopted during the early part of the 18th century. They were important practical arrangements, in harmony with the true interpretation of the views of Friends on the right exercise of spiritual gifts; but as the society became more formal and less earnest, they were permitted to fall into desuetude.

The length to which this Lecture has already extended must preclude my entering into any statistical detail of the experience of the Society, in connexion with the ministry during this epoch, as deduced from the following, and other information, in my possession:—

1st—A list of public Friends deceased in Great Britain and Ireland, arranged according to sex, in periods from 1700 to 1850. This list contains the record of 2630 ministers, of whom 1269, or nearly one-half, died during the period 1700 to 1750.

2nd—A similar list of public Friends deceased in the Quarterly Meeting for Lancashire, during the same period, arranged under the meetings where they respectively resided at death.

3rd—The number of certificates granted for religious

service out of the limits of their respective meetings to 95 ministers, resident in four Monthly meetings in different parts of this country, from 1700 to 1750.

I will state, in a few additional sentences, some conclusions to which this information has led me. The number of ministers during this epoch was at least three fold greater than at the present time, or in the ratio of 18 to 4. In 1700, there is reason to believe, that fully two-thirds of our meetings had acknowledged ministers residing within their limits. In 1750, however, it would appear that about that proportion of them were without resident ministers.

At the commencement of this, the 18th century, the itinerant activity of the ministry was very great. In 1750 it had become much less, though it continued to be in excess of the succeeding period. In a review of the history of this epoch, there is much that leads to the conclusion, that in the days of our great grandfathers Friends were not, whether we regard their condition or their action, all that we should wish them to have been, and certainly very far from what they were during the lifetime of those who were instrumental in gathering the society together.

And yet, while thus endeavouring, in the interests of the truth, to give a faithful record of their condition during this period, let us indulge no censorious spirit. The rather taking into account the characteristics of the times in which they lived, the advantages which they possessed, and the temptations to which they were exposed, let us remember our own infirmities and carefully guard ourselves from doing injustice to the memory of the dead. Compared with the state of the

people at large, the moral and religious condition of the Society was undoubtedly favourable, and even if we have reference to the high standard of Christian attainment, we may apply to no inconsiderable number of the second generation of friends, we say not whether to the majority of them, the language of a writer of ability and discrimination, who has not long since passed away from amongst us—"We know," says the late Samuel Tuke, "that during the period we have been reviewing, there was among the members of the society much unobtrusive piety and vigorous religious character. We know that the friends of that day stood high in the estimation of their fellow Christians for conscientious integrity. We know that there were not a few, who in their respective neighbourhoods, were as burning lights. We know, from good information, that there was much religious influence exerted on young persons, which tended to fix on their minds a deep reverence for the Almighty, and a tender fear of offending Him.

We know too when we, some of us, look back to the character—religious, moral and intellectual—of our fathers and grandfathers, that there was much, very much, in it, which we would wish, above all things to see realised in that of our children and grand-children."

The circumstances under which this changed condition of things manifested itself, and the action with which it became associated, must form the subject of another Lecture on the characteristics of the succeeding period.



## LECTURE FOURTH.

MODERN QUAKERISM :—ITS ORIGIN, CHARACTER, AND  
INTERNAL ECONOMY.

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"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

*St. Paul to the Galatians.*

"We are 'called unto liberty,' beloved friends; but it is the liberty of the renewed heart, which can no longer delight itself in sin, or in the love of the world—but finds its appropriate exercise in doing or in suffering according to the will of God. It is a liberty *not without law*, but *subject to the spirit of life in Christ Jesus*, which makes free from the law of sin and death."—*Yearly Meetings' Epistle*, 1862.

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uf In my last Lecture I referred to the religious condition of the Society of Friends during its middle ages, and to the causes that in my view had produced or influenced that condition. I endeavoured also to point out briefly and in general terms the character of the remedies that had been resorted to, for the removal of the evils which had begun to manifest themselves. To these two important departments of our inquiry I shall again have to refer, in discussing the action of the Yearly meeting at this time, and the consequences that flowed out of it.

The statements contained in that Lecture represent the condition of the Society at this period, as in some respects, better, but in other respects as worse than it really was. In the early part of the 18th century there was an amount of religious vitality which cannot be represented

by averages. In the later years, however, of the period, there was a general moral and religious declension, greater even than what appears on the record.

This was especially the case from about 1730 to 1760, during which time the religious life of the body was at a low ebb. The discipline was very imperfectly administered, and there is reason to believe that a considerable number of persons detached themselves from the ranks of the Society by reason of a simple lapse of interest in its proceedings.

In 1760 this laxity had become so serious and so manifest, that the Yearly meeting determined to deal with it through the appointment of a large Committee of its members. In the appointment of this Committee, and in the course of action with which it became associated, we have one of the most important epochs in our history.

It is often described as the period of the revival of the discipline, and, to a cursory observer, such only at first sight it may seem to have been; but it was in reality much more than this. It was the dividing line where an important phase of the Society's development terminated, and where another equally important commenced. To this new development I will refer in a subsequent part of this Lecture.

The Committee appointed by the Yearly meeting of 1760 consisted, originally, of about 58 persons, but to this number some addition was subsequently made. It was sub-divided into several sections, who proceeded to visit the Society in all parts of the nation.

The 1st section reported in 1762. This Report was presented by John Griffiths, of Chelmsford, from the

Committee appointed to visit the counties of Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Huntingdon, Cambridge, the Isle of Ely, Bedford and Hertford.

Everywhere they had found that the meetings for divine worship were neglected by many, and among not a few there was much worldliness and extravagance. The discipline was irregularly administered, though there was a living remnant in most of the meetings, in whom they found the savour of true religion. Most of the remaining Reports were presented in 1763.

The 2nd Report was brought in by John Hunt, of London, from the Committee appointed to visit the counties of York, Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby, and Leicester. In Yorkshire the meetings were large and solemn; but in many places the same evils were prevalent as were noticed in the preceding report. Several Friends were illuminating their shops on the occasion of victories gained in the war, in which the country was then engaged. Others, whilst refusing themselves to fight saw no objection to providing substitutes to fight on their behalf. In many districts the life of religion was low, and there was an absence of that Christian courage, in dealing with delinquents, which ever results from a true zeal for God.

Jeremiah Waring, of Wandsworth, presented the Report from the Committee for Kent, Sussex, Surrey, Hants and Berkshire. Here the state of things was found to be similar to that which existed in the districts previously reported upon. The Committee recommended the joining together of some of the executive meetings, the appointment of Overseers, and other changes calculated to bring about more order and regularity.



A large district, comprising eleven counties, in the centre and south-west of England, was visited by a committee of twenty-two Friends, whose report was presented by Isaac Sharples, of Hitchin. Here the moral and religious condition was again reported to be low. The discipline was frequently administered by small coteries, meeting in private houses, and the manners and customs of the world, such as the wearing of mourning apparel, &c., extensively prevailed. Tithes were voluntarily paid by many, and the practice was obstinately defended. In one instance a Monthly meeting refused to recognise the Committee, or to answer any of their inquiries.

Two written Reports, and one verbal, from other sections were presented by Saml. Fothergill, of Warrington. This eminent person, though of feeble health, was one of the most devoted, as he was certainly one of the ablest and most eloquent ministers then existing in the Society. His first Report related to the counties in the north and north-west of England:—"As the nature of our visit became known, we met a kind and open reception.\* \* In divers of the above counties we found a large body of Friends, many of whom are labouring in their several stations for the revival of our holy testimony \* \* \* \* But the love of the world has engrossed the attention of too many who might have been helpers in the Lord's work. On a careful inspection into the state of the church, we found the effects of this worldly spirit discovering themselves in the neglect of that great and indispensable duty, the worship of the Lord Almighty.

The meetings for discipline were also in some parts much neglected; few attend them unless by appointment.

The great end of discipline, which is to *dress the garden and keep it*, is too much neglected, and we fear, by some corrupt minds opposed. In general we found the Society in love, there were few open differences \* \* Yet in many places the precious unity of the Spirit is greatly obstructed by the above mentioned causes."

In some places they found that "intemperance prevailed, to the great reproach and public scandal of our religious profession, and there has been much remissness in dealing with such open transgressors \* \* Too many have departed from plainness in its divers branches and set light by our testimony in this respect, and by uniting in the corrupt customs and conversation of the world, have laid themselves open to the snare of joining in marriage with those of other Societies."

"The neglect of Overseers in not duly discharging their trust, watching over the flock, and administering counsel and admonition, plainly and without respect of persons, hath been one great cause of disorders spreading among the churches."

The Report of the Committee appointed to visit Friends in the principality of Wales was very discouraging. It was presented to the Yearly meeting by John Townend, of London, in 1763. In this district the meetings had been from the first, in situation, far apart from each other. Quakerism had never fairly taken root among the Welsh. The organization of the Society had been imperfectly carried out, for the system of correspondence and subordination among the meetings had been subjected to great dislocations. Large numbers of the members had emigrated to America; mixed marriages had become almost universal, so that the small isolated

meetings in the Principality at this date were fast dying out.

In several respects the Reports of these good men were of great value and importance. They aroused a more healthy and earnest interest in the scattered communities of Friends in different parts of the country, and they drew the attention of the Yearly meeting to the circumstances of their actual condition. The Committee saw the evils, and described them as they had seen them, but it is questionable whether their discrimination was equally clear as to the methods best adapted to their removal. In their view the remedy was to be looked for in better educational provisions, and in the more stringent application of church discipline.

I have spoken of the action of this Committee as being the dividing line between two phases of the Society's development, yet it is not thence to be inferred that any change in its religious principles was at this period introduced into the body, for it still adhered to the standard of its ancient creeds.

Even in discipline, though there was some modification, the current of our ecclesiastical arrangements continued to run in the old channels. But whilst no fundamental change in these respects was suggested, there had been, as I have already shown, a great change in the people, and this change now re-acted on everything connected with their conduct and proceedings.

From the earliest times there had been church discipline in the body, but, to a large extent, it was simple in its character, and individual and local in its administration. Being itself the issue of the spiritual life, and having its source in love, it was a spiritual power, and



as such an effective instrumentality in the regulation and government of the church. In this hidden power, acting upon the separate members of a living spiritual organism, we have efficient discipline, and yet but few rules, for it combines in a simple, and often a single agency, the legislative and the executive departments of the Christian administration. The Christian man is called into liberty, but in such an economy he becomes subject to a new law, and whilst keeping within the limitations of this law, there is developed that loving subordination one to another, among the members, without which the functions of the spiritual life can never be rightly exercised. But if, from any cause, the spiritual life declines or dies out, this hidden power, wherein dwells the only efficient church authority, will be found to decline or die with it, and too often, where this has been the case, it has been attempted to provide a substitute for it in the regulations of an external discipline. As disorders increase rules are multiplied, and in order to bring them to bear on those who need restraint, ecclesiastical centralization is increased.

Such was the condition into which the Society of Friends had drifted at the period on which we have now entered, and how best to preserve the conduct and manners of such a community within the limitations of the Christian precepts, constituted the difficult problem, calling for solution from the Yearly meeting of 1760. But the difficulties connected with the solution of this problem were not confined to the Society of Friends. About the same time similar difficulties, but different in degree, were encountered both by the Methodists and the Moravians.

In each case the object to be attained was substantially the same, *i.e.*—to build up and sustain a faultless church amid the ruins of our fallen humanity. Their respective Societies were to be so many gardens enclosed, and by strict supervision and discipline they were to “keep and dress them.” Such was their ideal, but it was destined never to be even approximately realised. It has been in the experience of the Christian church in every age, that lights and shadows have continued by turns to succeed each other. Cheering displays of earnest piety have been followed by periods of cold hearted indifference, and the wisest of ecclesiastical arrangements have but too often been thwarted by human infirmity and error.

In his early ministry, Count Zinzendorf attempted to control these irregularities, and to this end he organised the Moravian community at Herrnhut. He appointed Elders and Overseers of the flock, laid down rules to regulate their dress and manners, exercising all practicable care to keep out persons of unsound sentiments or immoral conduct. He ultimately, however, relinquished the attempt to enforce religious duties by authority: for experience convinced him that evils arising from human weakness can never be expelled by rules. Gifted with tender sympathy for the erring, he continued to pray for, to admonish, to watch, to test those who flocked into his community, and, by such processes, he drove away by degrees those whom he failed to assimilate into the life and functions of his church. He was especially careful to allow a free course to the divine influence, and he feared to mar its power by sharp and formal rules—endeavouring rather to

encompassed ~~subjugation~~ by ~~control~~, and to subjugate passion by love.

TOWARDS THE CLOSE OF HIS LIFE, he was urged to prohibit ~~sinuous~~ ~~inventions~~ and to put them down by rule. His answer shows his wisdom—"There is no way," he said, "of inducing men to take up the cross of Christ, except through their own conversion. To exercise an external constraint is only to induce hypocrisy, or to lead men to believe themselves Christians because they abstain from certain worldly practices."

With a remarkable genius for organisation, Wesley attempted, about this time, to attain the same object in his Connection, by means similar to those which had been adopted by the Moravian brethren; but, with a quick perception of the limitation of his own powers, he appears to have early relinquished the effort as hopeless. "He aimed," says Southey, "at making the Methodists a peculiar people, and he required them, like the Quakers, to intermarry among themselves. This point was determined in the first Conference—the want of such a regulation having been experienced. Many of our members, it was said, have lately married with unbelievers, even such as were wholly unawakened, and this has been attended with fatal consequences. Few of these have gained the unbelieving wife or husband generally, they have either themselves had a heavy cross, or entirely fallen back into the world." He seems, also, to have been enamoured with the idea of keeping down extravagance in dress by enforcing obedience to church regulations; for neither by the application of Christian counsel, nor by his great personal influence, could he keep the dress of his converts under any adequate con-



trol. "The very people that sate under the pulpit or by the side of it, were as fashionably adorned as others of their own rank. "This," said he, "is a melancholy truth—I am ashamed of it, but I know not how to help it. I call heaven and earth to witness, this day, that it is not my fault. The trumpet has not given an uncertain sound for more than fifty years past." Even to the end of his life he grieved over his want of success, and it is interesting to observe the mournful terms in which he reviews his course, acknowledges his failure, and turns with a sort of half belief to what he conceives *might* have been the superior efficacy of a resort to stern unyielding discipline. "I might," he says, "have been as firm as either the people called Quakers, or the Moravian brethren. I might have said this is our manner of dress, which we know is both scriptural and rational. If you join with us you are to dress as we do, but you need not join with us unless you please. But alas! the time is now past."

Such were the doubts and the difficulties that beset the course pursued by Wesley. In the opposite course adopted by the Yearly meeting of 1760, these difficulties were not diminished. With Friends, however, the time was not allowed to pass without a persistent attempt to rein in such irregularities by a firmer exercise of the authority of the church. They began by defining in sharp but artificial lines, who were, and who were not to be regarded as in religious fellowship with them. Out of these lines death had removed the first converts, but there still remained within them many of their unconverted children and grand-children.

From the influence of an immoral age—not adequately

counteracted by a vigorous religious life, or by the arrangements adopted for the determination of its membership—the Society of Friends, as stated in my last Lecture, had at this time become a *mixed community* to an extent unknown in its earlier experience: and this circumstance, during its middle ages, imported new difficulties into its legislation. Originally its external regulations were few, and adapted to the condition and wants of an essentially homogeneous body. They were now increased in number, and applied with greater strictness to a body constituted of different ingredients, and subsisting under materially different circumstances. The importance of this disparity between the regulations and the body to whom they were now applied, was not at the time sufficiently taken into the account, but the results, in course of years, began to develop themselves, in increasing the isolation, in diminishing the numbers, in restricting the action, and in other respects in powerfully modifying and giving an artificial character to the entire Society. I will endeavour to make these points more clear by referring to the effect of the regulations applying—1st, to the marriage of its members—2nd, to the maintenance of some of its external peculiarities—and, 3rd, to the arrangements adopted for the relief of its poor.

1st.—It was to be anticipated that when, by the success of his ministry, George Fox had drawn a body of converts around him, a variety of questions, springing out of a full reception of the Christian principles which he promulgated, would have to be considered and adjusted. Among these, one of the most important was marriage. Against the great heresy of a human priest-

hood, from the first he had fearlessly contended. By no money payment, by no participation in its services, by no voluntary act whatever would he recognise what he regarded as a great system of unchristian usurpation. Marriage was indeed God's ordinance, but the priest was not to be regarded in any special sense as God's representative. He objected, therefore, to the function of the priest in marriage, and he objected, also, to the ceremonial which the Church had decreed for its accomplishment. These opinions he held in common with a large proportion of those who at that time dissented from the Church of England. During the Commonwealth, by an Ordinance of the little Parliament passed in 1653, marriage had been treated as a merely civil contract, and a simple form, almost precisely similar to that adopted by Friends, was laid down for its accomplishment before the magistrate. This Ordinance was confirmed by the Protector's Parliament, in 1656; and, to prevent vexatious lawsuits, all marriages which had taken place under it were declared valid on the restoration of Charles II. But this Ordinance expired with the Commonwealth, and, even if it had continued in force, it was not altogether satisfactory to George Fox; though it is manifest that a large body of his followers had taken advantage of its provisions, for on no other ground can we account for the small number of marriages (194) registered by the Society as solemnized in its meetings during the period of the Commonwealth. In his view, a marriage between Christians was not to be regarded as simply a civil contract, for it was to be 'in the Lord.' Hence though the marriage of the parties was their own act, yet, to give it the religious sanction, it must be per-



formed with the consent and in the presence of the church. "Marriage," he says, "is God's joining, not man's. \* \* \* *We* marry none, but are witnesses to it." Thus a provision was required in the church for its due celebration, and also other regulations in connection with it. It was provided, therefore, that there should be in the Society no marriage of persons near of kin; that, in its celebration, none should sanction the priestly office, nor submit to an objectionable ceremonial; and, especially, that there should be no unequal yoking with unbelievers. It has been questioned whether the definition of a believer among the early Friends was sufficiently comprehensive to reach much beyond the pale of their own Society, for on many occasions expressions were used by them which would lead to the inference that, in their own opinion, they alone were the true Israel of God. This is an error to which all who are connected with religious revivals are peculiarly prone, for they find much in the church and in the world that leads into it. It has been shewn that Wesley's views tended strongly in this direction. His language on the subject of marriage I have already quoted. It is the language of experience no less than of principle; and therefore it was that the early Quakers, on almost every ground, had decided objections to what they denominated as 'mixed marriages.' In their social as in their religious intercourse, for many years, they were much blended together. Concerning marriage they were sufficiently numerous to admit of an adequate freedom of choice among themselves, and at that time, as a community, they were to a considerable extent religiously homogeneous. Hence, for a long period, the regulation restricting the marriage of

members to members worked favorably. To the circumstances, however, of a body like the Society of Friends, in the middle of the 18th century, the regulation as hitherto understood had no legitimate application. It was designed for a body united by spiritual affinities, and subsisting together as a distinct and separate people. It was now applied to a community in which membership was restricted and ultimately determined by considerations and accidents, not *necessarily* involving either in their presence or in their absence any definite judgment as to religious condition.

In a community so constituted there is, as respects marriage, the play of affinities, which no church regulations can effectually control; for men and women of the world will ever marry each other, without much reference to the consideration whether their union is approved by the church, or whether they are likely to prove to each other "meet helps" in the Lord. In such a community, the regulation does not secure even an agreement in religious principle, for the line of membership does not determine this. There may be agreement in moral habits and educational bias, but these, however desirable, do not prove that a marriage is or is not 'in the Lord.' Still less can the absence of this agreement in Educational bias, under such circumstances, form any ground upon which the church may remove a member from its fellowship. Thus the line of membership is essentially faulty as a standard. The rule in its origin was adapted to another state of things, and its unvarying application to the body in its altered condition could lead to nothing but confusion.

It was unfortunate at this time that as these marriages

became more common, the regulation itself began to be more strictly enforced. From the first, however, it failed to arrest the progress of the evil against which it was directed. But, by its operation, large numbers of persons were separated from the Society at the precise time when, under a genial treatment, many of them might have been brought more closely within the range of moral and religious influences. There is reason to believe that nearly one half of all the disownments, at this period, resulted from this cause alone, and that of every hundred persons married nearly forty married in violation of this rule. From about 1760, the period when these arrangements took a systematic and practical shape, we find the line of membership dividing the Society into two classes, members and non-members, which appear side by side in our registers of births and deaths. In these registers the columns proceed inversely, the non-members increasing, the members diminishing, under the operation of the new arrangements.

2nd—Let us now refer to the origin, and endeavour to ascertain the effect, of what are sometimes denominated the minor testimonies of the society, in determining its existing condition. We have the testimony of William Penn, himself a courtier and a gentleman, that in his intercourse with others, George Fox “was civil beyond all forms of breeding.” But with him the love of truth was a deeper sentiment than the duty of practising the forms of ordinary politeness. Hence from the first he declined the use of the complimentary phraseology then current. To him it appeared to be not consistent with true Christian sincerity. He could not therefore, for example, subscribe himself the obe-



dient, humble servant of any man, whose servant he was not; he could not call any man reverend whom he did not regard as worthy of being revered. The days of the week, and some of the months of the year, had been designated by names derived from heathen superstitions. In his view these names ought not to be used by Christians. The simple numerical designation was in many respects better and more convenient. It had moreover the sanction of ancient practice, and was free from the taint of a corrupt original. Some terms such as 'Church,' 'Word of God,' &c., used in the New Testament Scriptures, in a particular signification, had since acquired other meanings. These secondary significations he believed to be the source of much confusion of thought. He would, therefore, confine the words to their primary usage.

But perhaps his most conspicuous departure from the modes of speech then current among the higher classes of his countrymen, was in his manner of using the pronouns. He held that 'thou' was the generical name for the class of individual persons spoken to, and he objected to the use of 'you' in the second person singular. There were at that time some grounds for maintaining this distinction. The best usage of the language, which is the foundation of all grammatical proprieties, was not on this point then fully determined. This was, therefore, even in a literary point of view, to some extent an open question. It was convenient and in accordance with the analogies of many other tongues, to have a distinction between the singular and plural. "Thou" had been uniformly used as the second person singular in the authorised translation of the Scriptures, then but recently

issued. It was retained in their conjugations by grammarians, and in the book of Common Prayer. But with George Fox this was not altogether a literary question. He thought he saw in it some important religious and moral bearings. This simple mode of speech was not only the language of the Bible and of his own childhood, it was also the ordinary address of the middle and lower classes of his countrymen. He was to be no respecter of persons, he was not to use one language to the rich, and another to the poor. In his intercourse with the great he knew no fear. He stood erect before them in the simple majesty of his Christian manhood, regarding with a sacred scorn and loathing all servile cringings, all glorying flatteries and hypocrisies. He soon, however, found that an adherence to such a conduct and phraseology began to give offence, "for," he says, "it was a sore cut to proud flesh" to be addressed after this unusual fashion. Abuse and suffering followed; these endeared to him the more the cause for which he suffered, and conferred upon it a prominence in the estimation of his followers which essentially it did not possess. In the progress of time this question began gradually to assume new aspects.

The usage of the language which had been partial and doubtful became fixed. Modes of speech which originally were open to objection, in the opinion of some, by common usage had lost their original taint; hence, under these changed circumstances, in the manner of upholding this Christian testimony to truthfulness of speech, greater liberty of action might have been not only safe but desirable.

For, except we have strong religious grounds to the

contrary brought home to our individual convictions, we ought to be at liberty to give to every word the sense in which it is used by the purest writers and the most correct speakers of our day. "For the words of a language already framed being no man's private possession, but the common measure of commerce and communication, it is not for any one at pleasure to change the stamp they are current in, nor alter the ideas they are fixed to."\* But this liberty was not allowed, and much time and strength were spent in imposing the restriction on those who did not deem the practice so attempted to be enforced, as of the nature of a Christian obligation.

The Costume of the early Friends was not uniform—they dressed plainly, but they did not adopt any particular form of a plain dress. They belonged mostly to the middle or yeoman class, and, in consequence, they were to a large extent beyond the influence of fashion. A considerable proportion of them had been, moreover, before their connexion with the Society, a religious and seeking people, accustomed to square their conduct in its main outlines into a conformity with the Christian precepts. "Such persons," says Clarkson, "were found in plain and simple habits, notwithstanding the contagion of their superiors in rank. The men of this description generally wore plain round hats with common crowns. They had discarded the sugar loaf hat, and the hat turned up with a silver clasp on one side, as well as all ornaments belonging to it. They had adopted a plain suit of clothes, the colour of which was either drab or

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\* Locke.



grey. These were then the colours of the clothes of the peasants of England, as they now are of those of Portugal and Spain."

A plain grey coat with alchemy buttons, and girt round the waist with a leathern girdle, was worn by George Fox. This was the ordinary coat of men of his rank in his own times, and was probably descended from the old British frieze gown, girt about the body with a penny leathern girdle, mentioned in the Book of Martyrs as worn by Latimer and some of the early Reformers. On the application of *Christian principle* to dress, the early Friends were agreed. They regarded a conformity to the changing fashions of the world as sinful; but they left the particular forms and arrangements of dress to be regulated by the convictions and wants of the individual wearer. In the case of those whose dress had been plain on their joining the Society, no change was made; but when others of a gay appearance were brought to a knowledge of the truth, one of the first effects of the new conviction was the putting away of their fashionable apparel. "As soon," says Thomas Ellwood, "as my understanding began to open," (here was the true foundation of the change,) "and I felt some stirring in my breast tending to the work of a new creation in me, some evils I was required to put away and to cease from. I took off from my apparel those unnecessary trimmings, lace, ribbons, and useless buttons, which had no real service, but were set on only for that which was by mistake called ornament, and I ceased to wear rings." In this way the early Friends became a plain people, but without affecting uniformity in their plainness. Their circumstances and

their wants were different, and, keeping within the limits of Christian moderation, they consulted them. Their dress gave them little concern, and occupied little of their time or thought. Theirs was the freedom from the bondage of fashion which it is the privilege of Christians to enjoy: for he only "is a free man, whom the truth makes free; and all are slaves beside."

They regarded themselves as but strangers and pilgrims on earth. Everything, therefore, which tended to bind them to the earth, whether the pursuit of wealth, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life, they considered as not consistent with the great design of their being.

But these views they held in common with good men of other religious persuasions. Many, even of the Roman Catholic divines enforced similar opinions, and they were supported by Bunyan, Baxter, and others of the Puritan party. The same views were held by Wesley, and addressed to his followers a century later. "I exhort all who desire me to watch over their souls, to wear no gold, no pearls, or precious stones. Use no curling of the hair, nor costly apparel how grave soever. I advise all who are able to receive this saying, buy no velvet, no silks, no fine linen, no superfluities, no mere ornaments, though ever so much in fashion. Wear nothing though you have it already, which is of a flaming colour, or which is in any kind gay, glistening, or showy; nothing made in the very height of fashion; nothing apt to attract the eyes of bystanders. I do not advise women to wear rings, ear-rings, necklaces, laces of whatever kind or colour, or ruffles, which by little and little may shoot easily from one to twelve inches deep."

Such, substantially, were the views of the early Quakers on the subject of dress, and the great body of the first converts were in sympathy with them. But, after the restoration of Charles II., the passions of the age ran strongly in the direction of a foolish and sinful extravagance. Many of the young Friends had grown up without having been subjected to the restraints of true Christian conviction, and, as was to be expected, they came within the influence of the prevailing mania. How are such to be dealt with by the church? I know of no course, but to endeavour to make the tree good, that its fruit may be good also. No doubt many efforts were made in this direction, but, being only partially successful, they were supplemented by a different kind of action—a conformity to external simplicity began to be enforced by discipline.\*

By the authority of the superior meetings, all ribbons, rings, clasps, and other ornamental appendages, were forbidden; and thus Friends became, in their external appearance, a people distinct from others, and, by a natural process of assimilation, they were moulded by degrees into a unity of fashion among themselves; in

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\* A strong tendency towards this new course of action manifested itself soon after the death of George Fox. It was against this new development that Margaret Fox, in 1698, addressed Friends in an Epistle containing words of wisdom and of warning well calculated to arrest this tendency.

"Let us beware of being guilty or of having a hand in ordering or contriving that which is contrary to Gospel freedom. \* \* \* It is a dangerous thing to lead young Friends much into the observation of outward things, which may easily be done. For they can soon get into an outward garb, so as to be all alike outwardly, but this will not make them true Christians. It's the Spirit that gives life. I would be loath to have a hand in these things. The Lord preserve us that we do no hurt to God's work, and let Him work whose work it is."

*From Margaret Fox's Epistle to Friends.*



other words, they adopted a peculiar and nearly uniform plain dress.

Now, what was the effect of all this labour to attain uniformity? What the amount of substantial good that flowed from this attempt to stereotype a form of external simplicity, and to enforce its adoption?

The first and most important effect was to absorb in the effort a large portion of that Christian energy which in the earlier times had been better employed, and to concentrate it upon an object within the Society which, even if the end had been attained, would not have repaid the sacrifice.

But the end was not in any fair sense of the term attained, for the process by which it was to be healthily reached was reversed. To eradicate such evils, "it is necessary to enter into the passions of mankind, and to correct all those depraved sentiments that give birth to the extravagancies which appear in the outward dress and behaviour. Foppish and fantastic ornaments are more the indications of vice than criminal in themselves. Extinguish vanity in the mind, and you naturally retrench the little superfluities of garniture and equipage. The blossoms will fall of themselves when the root that nourishes them is destroyed."\*

3rd.—One of the most remarkable characteristics of the early Friends was their sympathy with the poor and afflicted. With them as with the church of the primitive believers, the provision for their poor members was one of the earliest subjects requiring concerted arrangements. In 1660, George Fox refers to a

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\* Addison.

General meeting which had been held for several years at Skipton in Yorkshire, but which was attended by many Friends from other parts of the nation. "Divers justices and captains had come to break this meeting up, but when they understood the business, Friends met about, and saw their books, and the amount of their collections for the relief of the poor, how we took care one county to help another and to help our Friends beyond the seas, and to provide for our poor, that none of them should be chargeable to their parishes, the justices and officers confessed, we did their work and passed away peaceably and lovingly, commending Friends practice.

"Sometimes there would come two hundred of the poor of other people and wait there till the meeting was over, (for all the country knew we met about the poor,) and after the meeting Friends would send to the baker's for bread, and give every one of these poor people a loaf, how many soever there were of them; for we were taught to do good unto all, though especially to the household of faith."

The occasion for this provision was much increased by the cruel persecutions and robberies to which, on their first rise, the Friends were everywhere exposed. It was no rare occurrence at that period for the father of a family to be thrown into a dungeon, and the house to be spoiled even of the children's beds and all their provisions. "Nor was it uncommon to seek their entire proscription and ruin by refusing to deal with them." Was it surprising, therefore, that, on this account, these people should cling all the more closely to each other? But they were united by stronger bonds

than these. The hearts of rich and poor were knit together in a holy relationship; brethren in the same covenant of promise and of the same household of faith.

If one member suffered, therefore the other members suffered with it. Whilst any were in want, even the things which were possessed by the others, they regarded not as their own. As was the case with the primitive Christians, the hearts of many of them so overflowed with loving sympathy, that "to their power, yea, even beyond their power," they abounded in the riches of their liberality to each other. The epistles of Fox abound with allusions to this practical Christian benevolence. "Let a house be provided for them that are distempered in mind, and also an alms-house for the poor that are past work. \* \* \* Let all widows be taken notice of, and encouraged in their outward business. If they have many children, put them out apprentices or servants, for they may be a burden to them to bring up. \* \* \* If there are many more poor belonging to one meeting than another, and that meeting thereby is burdened and oppressed, let the rest of the meetings assist them, \* \* \* that ye may bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ."

"In all your meetings enquire who is sick and weak, or in want, and widows and fatherless, or aged people that cannot help themselves; and let such as God hath distributed to, of that which God hath distributed, lay aside for the necessities of others—for 'he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and He loves a cheerful giver.'" Here we have the principle of the ancient Offering, and of the modern Systematic beneficence Society.



To those that married, he recommended, in place of the marriage feast usually provided, the substitution of provisions for the poor, "for they cannot feast you again," and, says he, "be of a free noble spirit, above all churlish misers, and niggards, and narrow spirits." How nobly kind are such sentiments as these, and truly Christian was the practice that rose out of them.

But, in course of years, this spontaneous benevolence began to be levied upon each member who was of ability to contribute, as an ordinary rate to be distributed by officers appointed for the purpose; and thus, on the part of the rich, the whole service was discharged in a systematic and perfunctory manner; and, on the part of the poor, the provision came to be regarded as a right to entire maintenance from the funds of the Society, as fixed and indefeasible as if claimed under the statute of Elizabeth. Thus, this provision, which was so Christian in its origin, became to some extent communistic in its practice; and, in course of time, numbers, whom Fox would not have recognised as even of the household of faith, began to claim entire support from it. The effect became speedily visible, as the Society changed by degrees its original character of a Christian church, for that of a corporation conferring certain outward privileges. The tendency, undoubtedly was to interfere with and to limit its labours among the poor. The evil was two-fold: the independent poor were prevented from applying for membership, lest they should be suspected of seeking chiefly the improvement of their worldly circumstances; and, on the other hand, it induced among Friends an undue caution in admitting the poor into membership;

for to draw a poor man into a church with a limited constituency of wealthy persons becomes a much more important question when his conversion entails the obligation to give him, if necessary, entire outward support, and to provide for the education and apprenticing of his family. It was thus that the Society began to place its members in the bonds of its disciplinary regulations. These regulations, as I have already shewn, rested on great principles, and were intended to enforce undoubted obligations. But the error lay, when principle did not operate, in attempting to attain the end by the exercise of external constraint.

Parents, and all acting *in loco parentis* towards those in early life, are bound to exercise such restraint, by virtue of the authority vested in them for that end, as the responsible heads of the families committed to their care. The church, however, is not a family, and its officers are not parents. The family and the church are both divine institutions, but the one cannot perform the work of the other: each has its own duties to discharge, and these involve distinct agencies and separate arrangements.\*

In a religious community, under the most favourable circumstances, there is in the multiplication of rules an unhealthy and dangerous development: for the Christian they are not needed, and in the case of those who are ignorant and out of the way, we may bring about, by ecclesiastical restrictions, an outward propriety of demeanour in which the individual takes rest, but which

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\* "The family has a two-fold character. It is at once a civil and a sacred thing. It is both a monarchy and a church. Its rightful head is a king and a priest."—*The Priesthood of Home*.

may have little if any connection with an improvement in his religious condition.

To enforce general principles, therefore, and to point out their application to the practical details of every day life, is the perpetual mission of the church. But, in bringing these principles to bear on the varying circumstances and complicated relations to which they apply, there must be freedom of individual action and personal responsibility. For right conduct is not that which is fashioned by outward rules, but that which springs from Christian motives, and which is the result of convictions so deep and earnest, that they have power to change the life.

Let it not, however, be inferred from the preceding description, that these attempts to make the Society a separate and peculiar people, absorbed the whole energy of the Yearly meeting. Many other questions affecting both the conduct of Friends, their religious condition, and their duties to others, came at this period from time to time under review, and resulted in the issue of many new regulations.

As these regulations were multiplied, and the discipline increased in complexity, greater attention became necessary to the composition and character of meetings for its administration, and so by degrees, the Society assumed the type of a more perfect organization. In 1766 the women Friends applied for permission to constitute themselves a Yearly meeting, but this power was not then granted to them. On a second application in 1784, they were allowed to institute a system of correspondence with their subordinate meetings; but it was not till 1790, that the Yearly meeting of women Friends, constituted of representatives, and with its exist-



ing functions, was commenced. In 1786, the Ministers and Elders began to meet as a select and separate body. Previously their queries were mostly answered in the open Quarterly meeting, and Overseers, Representatives, and other well-concerned Friends, were admitted into their meetings where such were held as distinct from the meeting at large. In 1789, the Yearly meeting gave its judgment on a proposition from one of the Quarterly meetings,—that the offices of Elder and Overseer are distinct, and do not concur in one person unless he be appointed to each office. From this time, the distinction between Elders and Overseers was maintained, and a system of mutual correspondence and subordination was established in these select meetings, as distinct from the meetings for discipline.

Soon after the establishment of the Yearly meeting of women Friends, and of regular meetings for Ministers and Elders, the Yearly meeting itself was changed from a select and representative assembly to the open and popular meeting which now exists.

About this time (1793) the present large meeting houses in Bishopsgate Street were erected. It has been remarked by a Friend, recently deceased,\* who was conversant with the Yearly meeting, both before and after the change, that since the opening of the new houses in Bishopsgate Street, “the numbers attending the Yearly meeting have been increased three-fold, and that they consist no longer of Friends sitting in awe of the meeting and rising with fear and trembling to speak, but of men accustomed to vivacious discussions, not a few of whom

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\* Luke Howard.

are speakers in other assemblies." There is some truth in this remark: the contrast between the two periods is doubtless in many points considerable.

There are imperfections inherent in the existing administration, but we are not ignorant that there were imperfections also in that which preceded it; and, on a balance of the two, there is much ground to doubt the soundness of the conclusion that, as a whole, the former arrangements were better than these. Under its new organization, the Yearly meeting has continued to labour successfully with the Government for the removal of the few legal disabilities to which Friends were still subject.

Their affirmation in criminal cases has been accepted in lieu of an oath. The repeal of the "Test and Corporation acts" has thrown open to them, in common with other Dissenters from the Church of England, many offices connected with the civil administration of the country, from which they were formerly excluded by their conscientious scruples. In 1835, the law which gave power to ecclesiastical courts to imprison for non-payment of tithes was repealed, and the last Friend imprisoned on this account was set at liberty.

An act for the commutation of tithes has since been passed, which has still further simplified the process for the recovery of these payments from Friends. By decisions of Courts of Law, they have maintained their right to hold their meetings for discipline select and with closed doors. In the same manner they have sustained their claim to be relieved from the duty of serving as churchwardens, and from some other offices involving services inconsistent with their Christian testimonies.

The era of suffering for conscience sake has thus passed away, and with it the necessity for constant efforts to gain relief. Other objects, having for the most part a wider range and a different character, have since claimed the attention of the Yearly meeting, and its representative Committee, the "Meeting for Sufferings." For the promotion of these new objects we find them often in communication with the Government, or delivering addresses in the closet of the King.

It was towards the close of the 18th century that the remarkable development of politico-religious and benevolent effort, which has been so striking a characteristic of modern Quakerism, may be said to have fairly commenced. In 1783, the Yearly meeting took up the question of the Abolition of the Slave Trade. The support of the Bible and Anti-Slavery Societies followed early in the present century; and, in 1805, the question of Popular Education in connection with Lancasterian Schools began to engage much of the attention of Friends. \*

On the establishment of the Holy Alliance, the Meeting for Sufferings addressed its Imperial and Royal members in support of Religious Liberty.

Since 1819, the amelioration of the Criminal Code has received much attention; and, more recently, Institutions for the promotion of Peace and Temperance, and for the abolition of Church Rates, have found their most earnest and stable supporters in the Society of Friends.

It is difficult to estimate, as regards others, the amount of good that has resulted from these efforts. It has certainly been considerable, but, as regards the Society



itself, I think it must be admitted that their absorption to so large an extent into the regular proceedings of the Yearly meeting has tended to *secularize* its service, and to introduce an unfavourable change into the character of its deliberations. The warfare of the early Friends was essentially a spiritual warfare. It was for the most part aggressive and direct, employing no intermediate agencies. As good soldiers, trained to endure hardness, their spiritual weapons were kept bright by use. In recent times we have done, and rightly done, much benevolent work by proxy. Personal service has in many instances been rendered, but, in too large a proportion of cases, the services of others have been enlisted by a judicious distribution of money, whilst our department has been to make the money. This system of operation has restricted and in other respects, I think, interfered with a preparation for the exercise of individual gifts for general usefulness, and has thus influenced unfavourably the Society's action.

As a system, it can hardly be said to be germane to its principles—for Quakerism contemplates no systematic provision for the employment, within its own organization, of paid proxy services and separate agencies for the discharge of religious duties.

There is reason to believe that the Society, especially during the second half of the 18th century, was also injuriously affected by a phase of doctrinal thought that then became widely current in the religious world—for the writings of the mystic divines met with much acceptance among many about this time. Fenelon, Lady Guyon, Thos. A. Kempis, Hugh Turford, Wm. Law, and other writers of this school, were much read,

especially by Friends and Moravians, and they evidently exercised no small influence on some of our best and most earnest thinkers.

The religious literature then circulated abounds with figurative illustrations of spiritual truths, and with recommendations to Friends to be much in retirement, to practise divine contemplation, to dwell alone, and not to be numbered with the nations. There is something in all this that commends itself to our experience in our best moments, but, though containing a truth, it does not exhibit, in harmonious proportions, the whole truth. Whilst accepting, therefore to the full, the view of Wordsworth,—

“Nor less, I deem that there are powers,  
Which of themselves our minds impress,  
That we can feed this mind of ours,  
In a wise passiveness,”

let us accept, also, the co-relative truth, that the active must balance the passive, the practical the contemplative, whenever we desire to bring about a healthy condition of things.\*

No one appears to me to have resorted more beneficially to retirement for meditation and prayer than George Fox; but when he had obtained the victory through faith, he was not satisfied there to rest “feeding his mind in a wise passiveness.” He not only began himself to walk by faith, but he opposed those who

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\* A great part of mankind owe their *principles* to their *practice*; that is, to that wonderful accession of strength and energy which good *dispositions* receive from good *actions*. It is difficult to sustain virtue by meditation alone; but let our conclusions only have influence enough once to determine us upon a course of virtue, and that influence will acquire such augmentation of force from every instance of virtuous endeavour, as ere long to produce in us constancy and resolution, a formed and a fixed character.—*Dr. Paley.*

walked in a different direction, by an active testimony. The effect produced on the ministry of Friends in the middle ages by this phase of religious thought, combined with the restrictions to which the exercise of spiritual gifts had been subjected, was very marked. The witness became feebler, and the ministers both less numerous and less active. In the service, to a large extent, as has been already stated, the women displaced the men.

This tendency to spiritual abstraction, accompanied as it was by a somewhat defective inculcation of positive truth, produced, it is to be feared, in some minds, a confusion of thought, favourable to the reception of the poison diffused by Hannah Barnard among Friends in Ireland, and by Elias Hicks among Friends in America, and ultimately led to a rebound in the opposite direction in the more recent secession in Manchester and elsewhere.

Among the several agencies that have moulded the character and influenced the development of modern Quakerism, its system of Education may be regarded as the most important and powerful. To this subject I will therefore advert in a few additional observations.

I have already stated that, towards the close of the 17th century, funds were provided by which day schools, taught by Friends, were established in the compass or within reach of most of our principal meetings. Many of the teachers of these schools were men of competent learning and ability; some were authors, and not a few of them were able and devoted ministers of Christ. There can be no doubt, therefore, that a considerable influence was exerted upon the rising generation through the agency of these establishments. But the power of a day school training is limited by several circumstances.



When combined with a good home, and with pure and virtuous associations in the school, such a training is to be regarded as very favorable to the formation of good habits, and it may be even of true Christian character. But when these conditions are not united, the results are frequently far from what we should desire.

In some localities, the influence of a day school may be favorable, in others the reverse, but as a whole the effects of such a training are isolated and irregular. There is no unity of system and object in these institutions, no working by common means towards a common end. However, therefore, such an education may act upon the individual, it can exert no material power over the character of a community circumstanced as was the Society of Friends during the last half of the 18th century.

At this period, the larger proportion of its members resided in rural districts. In the country schools, the children came into contact with injurious moral associations. "Why not, therefore, it was asked, select a secluded situation for them during the course of their education, where they may be kept from bad company in the way of association, and from seeing the bad things which children are exposed to at home?" The idea was in harmony with the prevailing tone of thought.

The subject was taken up with interest by Dr. Fothergill of London, and other prominent members of the Yearly meeting. On all hands, the day schools were admitted to have failed; they had not produced in the youth of the Society those moral habits, neither had they fostered those religious principles which every

Christian parent desires to see implanted in the mind of his child. The Yearly meeting, therefore, determined to act for the body. Under its authority, a national boarding school for 300 children, the issue of parents not in affluent circumstances, was opened at Ackworth, in Yorkshire, in 1779. The results were so far encouraging, that a few years later, other similar institutions, but on a somewhat smaller scale, were commenced; in 1808, at Sidcot, for the S. W. of England; in 1811, at Croydon, for London and Middlesex; and in 1815, at Wigton, for Cumberland and the North.

Simultaneously with this movement in England, the question was taken up by Friends in Ireland, who opened in 1785, a boarding school for the children of Leinster province, at Mountmellick; in 1793, for Munster province, at Waterford; and in 1794, for Ulster province, near Belfast. Several other boarding schools, affording a more liberal mental culture, were also opened for the education of the higher classes.

About the same time, and much after the same manner, the educational movement was taken up by Friends in America. In 1792, by Philadelphia Yearly meeting, and subsequently by Ohio, New England, North Carolina, and Indiana. To these schools Friends in England forwarded considerable contributions. Nor was it for its members only that this educational provision was made by the body. The benefits were extended at a later period to the children of many who had been separated from its communion. Since 1832, four or five other boarding schools have been opened, providing accomodation for about 300 of this class. For the establishment and

support of this great educational organization, and for purposes connected with it, large sums of money have been at different times contributed, amounting altogether to nearly a quarter of a million sterling, and for its maintenance, several thousands of pounds are still annually collected. On the whole, it may, I think, be safely asserted, that in no existing religious organization have we the same ample provisions for education, and that in none are the young so carefully and so generally educated.

The conduct of a community, trained and constituted as is the Society of Friends, differs from that of the average population of the country in several particulars: among these, one of the most important has relation to marriage.

We are informed by statisticians that the tendency of the sexes to marriage is liable to be modified by a number of conditions.

Above a certain point in education, comfort of circumstances, and respectability of position, the tendency diminishes, and we see men and women of the middle and upper classes living contentedly in celibacy from a dread of the increased expenses of matrimonial life. The extent to which this indisposition to marry has, in later years especially, been developed amongst Friends, whether resulting from our educational system, our church regulations, our social circumstances, or from other less obvious causes, indicates a condition requiring to be carefully guarded against.

It would be easy, if the limits of this Lecture admitted of further expansion, to point out many other peculiarities connected with our condition, both as a



church and as a population, which have been silently gathering around us, but especially during the epoch I have just travelled over. These external accretions, which are not of the *essence* of true Quakerism, have contributed much to render our existing position not only artificial, but to a certain extent untenable. In this condition, however, we are not destined to remain at rest. The evidence is not wanting to show that we are now approaching another phase of development.

If, by the action of the past, we have to some extent been brought into bondage, let us beware lest the liberty of the present lead us into latitudinarianism.

To early Quakerism, the indwelling Spirit, the Representative in the church on earth of its risen Lord, was both a motive power and a restraining law.

Equally opposed now as then to deadness on the one hand, and to false liberty on the other, wherever He is in dominion, He still remains as a Guide to the church, to be conservative and safe. Even in the process of removing things that are shaken, as of things that are made, His purpose is manifest—"that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Whilst not blind to the dangers inherent either in the former or the present condition of things, I am not one of those who have seen in the establishment of our discipline, or in its subsequent revisions and changes, any covert purpose on the part of the Yearly meeting, to build upon other than the ancient foundations.

I have elsewhere expressed, and I venture again to repeat my conviction, that the decadence of churches is often the result of causes to a large extent within the influence of their own control; among which, not the

least important, is a misapprehension of the true purpose and spirit of their original, leading them to an over rigid adherence to arrangements and modes of action in their institution good, because in harmony with a then existing state of things, but ever more or less temporary, because requiring in each successive age to be adapted to new conditions of society, and to the ever varying wants of the great family of man. Such well digested modifications of external arrangements, involving, it may be, changes in modes of procedure, are not to be regarded as departures from fundamental truths and principles: for we may adhere so long and so tenaciously to stereotyped forms as to bring ourselves into a practical isolation, involving the sacrifice of our influence over those by whom we are surrounded.

If, as a Christian community, we have, through a too rigid adherence to some of our past arrangements, drifted into a false and untenable position, let us not, on this account, shrink from the consideration how we can, in accordance with our distinguishing principles, again assume our true place in the Christian church, by discharging our mission to our own generation as our forefathers did to theirs.

In this course we may encounter some difficulties, but these are not insuperable. In endeavouring however to solve them, we must not ignore the past and proceed at once to lay aside the old arrangements and to organise anew as if these had never existed; but we must by degrees adapt our practice and our regulations to a somewhat different order of things which we desire to see established, in which spiritual life and

health, with the freedom and energy which follow in their train, may again, as at the beginning, be the normal condition of the church.

Such I believe to be the character and tendency of the changes recently introduced into our discipline. It has been said, however, that Friends have abandoned their distinguishing peculiarities, and taken new ground. I have endeavoured to show that we hold no peculiarities but such as are connected with principles binding upon all Christians.

We may never abandon that peculiarity into which the truth leads, and which, flowing out of true cross-bearing, is ever found associated with zeal unto good works. But it has been incidental to some of our past arrangements, that through them we have been led into exclusiveness.

In religious interest and sympathy we have become too much separated from the world around us. Our Christian service has thus been not only cramped and distorted, but far too largely confined to ourselves. It was not so in the beginning. We require to build again on the old foundations, and, armed with the force of truth, to make our influence felt in the world.

For the accomplishment of such a work there are some indications connected with our present circumstances that are not altogether cheering. There exists among many of our young people much earnest religious thought, but too large a portion of it, in some districts, floating into a loose and aimless eclecticism, instead of being devoted to the service of the Society, from lack of decision, is dissipated and lost. In common with other portions of the Christian church, we still suffer



from the intensity of our worldliness, and the absorbing activity with which business is prosecuted in our day. Nothing but the power of a victorious faith can save us from this deadening influence in its manifold transformations.

Our future, however, has lights, as well as shadows. Let us look upon these and take courage. I think it will be admitted that there is to be found in the body, at this time, greater religious earnestness, combined with an increasing exercise of spiritual gifts; and it is interesting to know that many of these gifts have been recognised by the church as in various degrees of the character of true gospel ministry.

Among those recently acknowledged as ministers, the number of men is again found to preponderate over that of women. But not only has the *number* of our ministers of late much increased, their *dedication* to the service has more than kept pace with that increase. Our religious action has become more varied, more local, and spontaneous; and, in connection with it, our small scattered meetings are becoming in many districts objects of the increased care and sympathy of the body.

A large band of other labourers, not directly connected with the Christian ministry, have sprung up, and have engaged in benevolent efforts of a more decidedly religious type; and personal, as distinguished from proxy services, are again increasing among us.

The chasm which, during the last two or three generations in particular, has divided us in religious interest and sympathy from the population around us, is thus to some extent being bridged over by new developments arising out of the circumstances of our own times.

Our more numerous public meetings, our first day schools with their adult classes, our cottage readings, and other agencies of like character, are favourable indications—movements in the right direction. Whilst engaging, however, in such labours for the benefit of those beyond our limits, let us not fail in our duty to our own members. The two courses of service will be found to be in true harmony.

They will act and re-act upon each other, and both will prosper in exact proportion as neither is neglected. Bracing ourselves therefore, to the double conflict, and gathering wisdom from our past experience, let us look hopefully forward.

We have yet a great mission in the church of the future. The aspects of the times call for its exercise.

Standing on the mount in a dry season, the Prophet saw by the eye of faith, some indications which caused him to gird up his loins for a vigorous race. So may the cloud rising in our horizon, which, though yet but as the size of a man's hand, cheer us onward to higher efforts and be to us the auspicious portent of an abundant rain.

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